

## Communal Creativity in the Making of the 'Beowulf' Manuscript

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# Communal Creativity in the Making of the 'Beowulf' Manuscript

*Towards a History of Reception for the Nowell Codex*

*By*

Simon C. Thomson



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Cover illustration: Magical trees, on, l-r, 100(96) (BL103)v; 102 (BL105)r; 103 (BL106)v.

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*To Jenny Fawson*

we're anything brighter than even the sun  
(we're everything greater  
than books  
might mean)  
we're everything more than believe  
(with a spin  
leap  
alive we're alive)  
we're wonderful one times one

from E.E. CUMMINGS, *if everything happens that can't be done.*





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# List of Abbreviations

ACMRS	Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies
ASE	<i>Anglo-Saxon England</i>
ASMMF	<i>Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts in Microfiche Facsimile</i>
ASPR	Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records
BL	British Library
CCC	Corpus Christi College
EEMF	Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile
EETS	Early English Text Society
ES	<i>English Studies</i>
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
MLN	<i>Modern Language Notes</i>
MRTS	Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies
MS	manuscript
NM	<i>Neuphilologische Mitteilungen</i>
n.s.	new series
pers. corr.	personal correspondence
RES	<i>Review of English Studies</i>
unpubl.	unpublished
USML	Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy

# Terms Used

## The Nowell Codex and Its Texts

As will become apparent, what I will usually call the ‘Nowell Codex’ is not a straightforward artefact: even its title is contested. I am following Kemp Malone, who first used that name.<sup>1</sup> The shelfmark is London, British Library, Cotton MS Vitellius A. xv (Second Part). It is more widely recognised as ‘the *Beowulf* manuscript’.<sup>2</sup> The difficulty in using the shelfmark is partly its cumbersome nature, and partly that what I call the Nowell Codex is the second half of that volume, having been bound together with the Southwick Codex.<sup>3</sup> Using one name makes confusion with Cotton Vitellius A. xv as a whole inevitable; I will use ‘Vitellius A. xv’ only when referring to the composite book. The two parts were probably united between 1628 and 1638 by Richard James, Robert Cotton’s librarian.<sup>4</sup> His motivation remains unclear since the Southwick Codex, a twelfth-century collection of Old English religious texts, seems to have little direct connection with the Nowell Codex.<sup>5</sup> Although interesting in its own right, the Southwick Codex has been little studied.<sup>6</sup>

For obvious reasons of economy and the significance of the text, ‘the *Beowulf* manuscript’ is the term most commonly used by non-specialists and indeed in the main title to this volume. The name is useful because it calls attention to the most famous text in the manuscript. But this in itself makes its value questionable: it is not clear that the compiler(s) of the Nowell Codex saw *Beowulf* as

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1 Kemp Malone, ed., *The Nowell Codex (British Museum Cotton Vitellius A. xv. Second MS)*, EEMF XII (Copenhagen, 1963). It is §216 in Neil Ker, *A Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford, 1957); §399 in Helmet Gneuss and Michael Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: A Bibliographical Handlist of Manuscripts and Manuscript Fragments Written or Owned in England up to 1100* (London, 2015).

2 Most notably Kevin Kiernan, *‘Beowulf’ and the ‘Beowulf’ Manuscript* (Ann Arbor, 1981, revised edition 1996).

3 Malone was also the first to give the Southwick codex this name.

4 Kiernan, *‘Beowulf’ Manuscript*, 66, 70.

5 Elaine Treharne has made a provocative argument about reading the two codices together, in ‘Invisible things in London, British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius A. xv’ at the 49th International Congress on Medieval Studies §263, Kalamazoo 2014. I do not attempt to follow her here.

6 For descriptions, see Roland Torkar, ‘Cotton Vitellius A. xv (pt. 1) and the *Legend of St Thomas*’, *ES* 67 (1986), 290–303; Johan Gerritsen, ‘British Library MS Cotton Vitellius A. xv: A Supplementary Description’, *ES* 69 (1988), 293–302; Kiernan, *‘Beowulf’ Manuscript*, pp. 110–119.

its focal piece and, as I will argue in this study, there is much to be gained from reading the poem in the textual context it is given here. To make matters more confusing, ‘the *Beowulf* Codex’ is used by Kiernan as a term specifically for the pages containing that poem: it is (or was at the time of his original publication) a significant element of his argument that *Beowulf* formed a codex by itself.<sup>7</sup>

Unfortunately, similar arguments can be used against ‘the Nowell Codex’ as a title. Kiernan calls it a “confusing new name”, pointing out that if few scholars know what Vitellius A. xv is, fewer still have any idea about the Nowell Codex.<sup>8</sup> It is so called because Laurence Nowell’s name appears on what is now its first page, along with the date 1563.<sup>9</sup> This, however, is about two-thirds through the first text – a narrative of Saint Christopher’s passion – so the opening material at least must have been lost before Nowell signed what was presumably a new possession. The original volume was, in fact, configured differently at start and end as I will discuss in Chapter 2. In short, although ‘the Nowell Codex’ describes the material I am considering, the name does not represent the manuscript as it was conceived or produced. This ‘original’ intention is the focus of this book, but accessing it is challenging, for almost nothing is clear-cut about this eleventh-century compilation.

As it now stands, the Nowell Codex contains five texts, two of which are incomplete. These are not titled by the scribes, and, like the manuscript, have sometimes been given different titles by scholars. I will call them

*The Passion of St Christopher* [henceforth *St Christopher*];  
*The Wonders of the East* [henceforth *Wonders*];  
*The Letter of Alexander to Aristotle* [henceforth *Alexander*];  
*Beowulf*;  
*Judith*.

7 Kiernan has moved away from his position that *Beowulf* was produced separately, and I am not aware of any other current proponents of this view. At times, Kiernan uses ‘the *Beowulf* Codex’ to clarify this point of his argument, but does not do so in his title. Robert E. Bjork and John D. Niles, eds., *A ‘Beowulf’ Handbook* (Exeter, 1997) use the term ‘*Beowulf* codex’ to mean what I am calling ‘the Nowell Codex’, but do not engage with the manuscript in any sustained way; the term is also used by William Schipper in ‘Style and Layout of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts’, *Anglo-Saxon Styles*, ed. Catherine E. Karkov and George Hardin Brown (New York, 2003), 151–168. Kiernan still sees *Judith* as a separate project. This does not seem likely; see Chapter 2 here; Peter Lucas, ‘The Place of *Judith* in the *Beowulf* Manuscript’, *RES* 41 (1990), 463–478; A.J. Ford, *Marvel and Artefact: The ‘Wonders of the East’ in Its Manuscript Contexts*, Library of the Written Word – The Manuscript World 7 (Brill, 2016), p. 56.

8 Kiernan, *‘Beowulf’ Manuscript*, pp. 65–66; the quoted phrase is p. 65.

9 91(93) (BL94)r. I discuss the folio numbering below.

## Foliation and Gatherings

Vitellius A. xv came into the possession of the British Museum in 1753, when Robert Cotton donated his manuscript collection, forming the basis of what would become the British Library. While permanent storage was being sought, the collection was stored at Ashburnham House. In 1731, the building burned to the ground, destroying some manuscripts and damaging many others.<sup>10</sup> Though Vitellius A. xv was less damaged by fire and water than some of the collection, most pages are darkened, all bindings and threads are lost, margins are burnt away, and many words and letters have been lost. Creating a major challenge for studies such as this, the fire also destroyed the stitching of the pages and all other straightforward evidence about how the book was put together. The manuscript survived into the digital age thanks to careful protective work. Each page was placed into a stiff paper frame and these were rebound. Unfortunately, the frames cover up many letters and parts of letters, some of which have since been recovered through the use of digital photography with ultra-violet light. At different points in the rebinding process, most likely shortly after the fire, two gatherings were swapped over and some individual pages moved out of position. In addition, as with many medieval manuscripts, Vitellius A. xv has been subject to various reorganisations, with additional pages dividing the two component codices inserted and removed at different times.

As a result of all of this activity, and the errors that often arise when numbering pages, the pagination of the Nowell Codex is even more challenging than its name. Kiernan has identified at least six distinct foliations:<sup>11</sup>

- i. c.1630, under the Cotton librarian, Richard James;
- ii. 1703, by Matthew Hutton, during the work of Humphrey Wanley's corrective committee;
- iii. 1793–1801, probably by Joseph Planta – this is the foliation Kiernan follows, and that written on the folios themselves;
- iv. before 1845, pencil numbers in the upper right corners of the paper frames, before Henry Gough rebound the manuscript in that year;

10 See Andrew Prescott, “‘Their Present Miserable State of Cremation’: The Restoration of the Cotton Library”, *Sir Robert Cotton as Collector: Essays on an Early Stuart Courtier and His Legacy*, ed. C.J. Wright (London, 1997), 391–454.

11 I follow Kiernan, *‘Beowulf’ Manuscript*, pp. 91–110, closely here. See also Gerritsen, ‘Supplementary’, pp. 300–302.

- v. 1845–1884, on the lower right hand corners of recto frames, by an archivist, which includes blank paper leaves inserted by Gough and which was perhaps intended to supplement that of 1845;
- vi. 1884, the final attempt, intended to clarify confusion between the fourth and fifth foliations: this is followed by the British Library.

This sequence of re-numberings means that each recto bears a baffling set of numerals. Kiernan's proposed foliation system is cumbersome for some pages, but makes good sense, because it identifies the 'manuscript foliation' number (Planta's work from between 1793 and 1801), and gives the British Library's 'official' number (which uses the 1884 foliation) afterwards in brackets; the latter remains important as it is used by many scholars and by the most recent digital facsimile.<sup>12</sup> More significant difficulties come with the third and fourth gatherings, which were swapped around at some point in the manuscript's history of rebindings. Kiernan's system puts the current location of these pages in brackets, with where they 'should' be as their main folio number. So 'folio 107(115) (BL118)' is currently the 115th leaf in Vitellius A. xv. If the gatherings were reordered according to their content, it would be 107th. In the British Library system it is 118th. To add to this confusion, two folios were misplaced when Planta foliated the manuscript. This means that Kiernan's general rule of using the number written on the pages cannot be followed: under his system these anomalies are folio 147A(131) (BL149) and 189A(197) (BL192) respectively, while there is no folio 131 or 197.<sup>13</sup> Using Kiernan's system often makes discussion of the manuscript look more complex than it is, and this will be particularly noticeable in my central chapters (2, 3, 4, and 5). But I have chosen it because it ensures that, whichever pagination readers are using, cross-reference is as straightforward as possible. Using this system, my observations and analyses can be compared more readily with other discussions and with the manuscript itself.

12 The British Library's *Digitised Manuscripts*, Cotton MS Vitellius A. xv <[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton\\_MS\\_vitellius\\_a\\_xv](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton_MS_vitellius_a_xv)>, online since February 2013, last accessed 27/1/16. All images of the Nowell Codex are taken from this website and used with kind permission by the British Library, © The British Library Board, Cotton Vitellius A. xv.

13 'Beowulf' *Manuscript*, pp. 85–110, with a succinct explanation of numbering pp. 103–104; Andy Orchard provides a concordance to the foliation of *Beowulf* in *A Critical Companion to 'Beowulf'* (Cambridge, 2003), Appendix 1, pp. 268–273; Asa Simon Mittman and Susan M. Kim give an overview of foliations of *Wonders of the East*, in *Inconceivable Beasts: The Wonders of the East in the 'Beowulf' Manuscript*, MRTS 433 (Tempe, AZ, 2013), p. 38. Where editors do not discuss foliation, they generally follow the 1884 system.



### Other Terms and Names

To aid clarity, it is appropriate to note here my use of some terminology. Because discussions of the Nowell Codex are often complex, I seek to use most terms with more precision and consistency than is usually demanded of them. 'Folio' is used interchangeably with 'leaf' to mean a single page, both recto and verso. 'Side' is not synonymous with 'leaf' and means either a recto or verso. 'Sheet' is used to mean a bifolium: the folded piece of parchment that formed two leaves, four sides. In the Nowell Codex, as all leaves have been slit and set separately in frames, it is not always certain which folios were originally part of the same sheet. 'Gathering' is generally preferred to 'quire'. Where I use the latter term it is in its precise sense of a group of four bifolia sewn together to produce an eight folio, sixteen page set. 'Gathering' means any group of bifolia sewn together: the gatherings in the Nowell Codex range from three sheets (six folios; twelve pages) up to five sheets (ten folios; twenty pages) in size. The amount of poetic text written on a side is given in poetic half-lines.<sup>14</sup> This follows the standard approach to measuring the density of scribal work, but uses half instead of whole poetic lines as a finer measure of quantity.

The codex was written by two scribes. A great deal of the discussion in this study is an attempt to engage with the interests and interpretations of these scribes, whom I will take to be men for the sake of convenience. No evidence has been found of either hand in other books or documents. Nor is there any clarity about where or exactly when they worked. One copied the prose texts *St Christopher*, *Wonders*, *Alexander* and the first two-thirds of *Beowulf*. The other copied the remainder of *Beowulf* and *Judith*. The scribes have been variously identified as (1) and (2),<sup>15</sup> S1 and S2,<sup>16</sup> the A-Scribe and the B-Scribe,<sup>17</sup>

14 Following Daniel Donoghue's definition in Michael Lapidge, John Blair, Simon Keynes and Donald Scragg, eds., *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 310–311.

15 So Ker, *Catalogue*, §216.

16 So Malone, *Nowell Codex*, followed by Josef Klegraf, 'Testing Faithful Copying in the *Beowulf* Manuscript', *Essays on the English Language and Applied Linguistics on the Occasion of Gerhard Nickel's 60th Birthday*, eds. in Josef Klegraf and Dietrich Nehls (Heidelberg, 1988), 206–220, followed in turn by Silva Inmaculada Senra, 'The Rune "Ethel" [ēþel] and Scribal Writing Habits in the *Beowulf* MS', *NM* 99 (1998), 241–247.

17 So J. Root Hulbert, 'The Accuracy of the B-Scribe of *Beowulf*', *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association of America* 43 (1928), 1196–1198.

601 and 602,<sup>18</sup> and Scribe A and Scribe B.<sup>19</sup> I follow this last convention because of its greater recent currency.

*Wonders* often does not give specific names to its creatures and peoples, or uses names now not in common usage. Thus, for instance, no names are given for the people with heads in their chests, nor for the long-eared tribe, respectively known, from Pliny, as *Blemmyae* and *Panotii* in parallel texts and discussions. Similarly, the half-man half-horses well-known today as Centaurs are named as *homodubii* (“doubtful people”), and the dog-headed people more often known as *Cynocephali* are called *conopenae*. In keeping with the current general practice of scholarship, I will use the classical name where it exists, and give the name used in Nowell where it varies from this in the first reference. For consistency, all of these tribal or species names are capitalised.

Apart from in Chapter 1, where they will be from the relevant standard edition, quotations from the Nowell Codex texts will be transcribed from the manuscript unless otherwise stated.<sup>20</sup> In addition to the use of letters commonly used in editions of Old English texts (*æ* / *Æ*, *þ* / *Þ*, *ð* / *Ð*), this includes the use of a crossed thorn (*þ̅*) where the scribes use it to indicate *þæt*; vowels with abbreviation marks (most frequently *ū̅*), usually to indicate following *m*; the occasional other letter with a bar when the scribes use it to indicate a following letter, such as *ḡ* for *-ge-*; wynn (*ƿ*) for modern *w*; the Tironian sign *7* which both scribes use as an abbreviation for *and*. When relevant to the discussion, I will format quotations as they appear in the manuscript.

Finally, Anglo-Saxon and Norman names will be given in their most commonly used modern form, with a brief discussion of naming conventions when they first occur if relevant. For Scandinavian names, I join Timothy Bolton in following the convention of using Old Norse (Old Icelandic) forms for people

18 Donald Scragg, *A Conspectus of Scribal Hands Writing English, 960–1100* (Cambridge, 2012).

19 So D.N. Dumville, ‘*Beowulf* Come Lately: Some Notes on the Palaeography of the Nowell Codex’, *Archiv für das Studium der Neueren Sprachen* 225 (1988), 49–63.

20 The standard edition of *St Christopher* is Phillip Pulsiano, ed., ‘The Passion of Saint Christopher’, *Early Medieval English Texts and Interpretations: Studies Presented to Donald G. Scragg*, eds. Elaine Treharne and Susan Rosser (Tempe, AZ, 2002), 167–199; the version of *Wonders* in Nowell is edited by Elaine Treharne in *Old and Middle English c.890–c.1450: An Anthology* (Oxford, 2000, 2009 third edition), 173–181; the *Wonders* text based on the copy in London, BL, Cotton MS Tiberius B. v but supplemented and with full references to Nowell is edited by Orchard in *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 184–203; *Alexander* is in Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 224–253; the standard edition of *Beowulf* is R.D. Fulk, Robert E. Bjork, and John D. Niles, eds., *Klaeber’s ‘Beowulf’ and the ‘Fight at Finnsburg’*, Fourth Edition, Toronto Old English Series 21 (London, 2008); that of *Judith* is Mark Griffith, ed., *Judith* (Exeter, 1997).

whose main sphere of action was in Scandinavia and Anglicised forms for those who operated primarily in English or international spheres.<sup>21</sup> Thus, for instance, Knútr (*inn ríki*) is always Cnut (“the Great”), whereas his father is Sveinn Haraldsson.

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21 Timothy Bolton, *The Empire of Cnut the Great: Conquest and the Consolidation of Power in Northern Europe in the Early Eleventh Century* (Leiden, 2009).



# Introduction

The *Beowulf* manuscript is in the curious position of being both heavily studied and rather undervalued. The sole surviving witness to the longest and finest work of Old English poetry, it is also a small, late, and imperfect copy which was furthermore significantly damaged by fire in 1731. Containing four other texts along with the famous poem, the Nowell Codex has more to tell us, and deserves closer attention. It is – so it seems to me – a creative and ambitious project undertaken in the vernacular by an eleventh-century community. Yet almost all previous engagements have been more interested in critiquing its preservation of *Beowulf* than in the manuscript as a whole, and most have examined only parts of the artefact with the intention of making targeted suggestions. In the present study, my hope is both to engage with the manuscript on its own terms, and to use it to consider what the reproduction of texts can tell us about the function of literature in late Anglo-Saxon England.

The most significant work on the manuscript is that by Kevin Kiernan, whose landmark volume, which focuses on the presentation of *Beowulf*, was first published over thirty years ago.<sup>1</sup> Numerous scholars have looked at how effectively (or not) the two scribes who worked on the manuscript presented the poem, primarily with the intention of assessing which of them was more accurate.<sup>2</sup> A very significant amount of work – far more than can be represented in a study of this kind – has been done on *Beowulf* as a text, with some response to its manuscript representation and potential meanings or value in late Anglo-Saxon England.<sup>3</sup> The manuscript is, though, often regarded as a late

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1 Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*. For a balanced review of the controversy thereby generated see Orchard, *Companion*, p. 20.

2 Bernhard ten Brink, *'Beowulf': Untersuchungen, Quellen und Forschungen zur Sprach- und Culturgeschichte der germanischen Völker* 62 (Strasbourg, 1888); Charles Davidson, 'Differences Between the Scribes of Beowulf', *Modern Language Notes* 5.2 (1890), 43–45; Charles McClumpha, 'Differences Between the Scribes of Beowulf', *Modern Language Notes* 5.4 (1890), 123; Charles Davidson, 'Differences Between the Scribes of Beowulf', *Modern Language Notes* 5.6 (1890), 189–190; Hulbert, 'B-Scribe'; Klegraf, 'Faithful Copying'; Senra, 'Scribal Writing Habits'; Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*; Leonard E. Boyle, O.P., 'The Nowell Codex and the Poem of Beowulf', *The Dating of 'Beowulf'*, ed. Colin Chase (Toronto, 1997), 23–32.

3 A full *Beowulf* bibliography 1990–2012 edited by Kevin Kiernan is available at <<http://www.uky.edu/~kiernan/Bib10/>>, last accessed 13/5/16; see also Kevin Kiernan, ed., with Ionut Emil Iacob, programming, *The Electronic 'Beowulf' 4.0: Fourth Edition*, online at <<http://ebeowulf.uky.edu/ebeo4.0/start.html>>, online since 2015, last accessed 13/5/16. See also Orchard, *Companion*, and Bjork and Niles, *Handbook*. Full surveys of early scholarship are in Birte Kelly's

and debased record of the poem and most studies are consequently uninterested in its representation therein other than to work past its errors towards an earlier incarnation.<sup>4</sup> Relatively few analyses, then, have considered why the poem might have inspired reproduction in the late Anglo-Saxon period or what it has to tell us about scribal approaches.<sup>5</sup> The texts other than *Beowulf* have been studied both in their own right and in comparison with the longer

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'The Formative Stages of *Beowulf*' Textual Scholarship Parts I and II', *ASE* 11 and 12 (1982 and 1983), 247–274 and 239–275 respectively. More recent book-length studies on various aspects of the poem are Helen Damico, *'Beowulf' and the Grendelkin: Politics and Poetry in Eleventh-Century England*, Medieval European Studies 16 (Morgantown, WV, 2015); Leonard Neidorf, ed., *The Dating of 'Beowulf': A Reassessment* (Cambridge, 2014); Peter Baker, *Honour, Exchange, and Violence in 'Beowulf'*, Anglo-Saxon Studies 20 (Cambridge, 2013); Nickolas Haydock and Edward Ridsen, *'Beowulf' on Film: Adaptations and Variations* (London, 2013). Studies that engage with the poem in its manuscript include Mark Faulkner, 'Teaching *Beowulf* in its Manuscript Context', *Teaching 'Beowulf' in the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Howell Chickering, Allen J. Frantzen and R.F. Yeager, MRTS 449 (Tempe, AZ, 2014), 169–175; Andy Orchard, 'Reading *Beowulf* Now and Then', *Journal of the Spanish Society for Medieval English Language and Literature* 12 (2003–04), 49–81; Orchard, *Companion*; Kevin Kiernan, 'The Eleventh-Century Origin of *Beowulf* and the *Beowulf*-Manuscript', *Dating*, ed. Chase (1997), 9–22; Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*; Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*; Kenneth Sisam, 'The Compilation of the *Beowulf* Manuscript', *Studies in the History of Old English Literature*, ed. Kenneth Sisam (Oxford, 1953), 65–96.

- 4 For example, Bjork and Niles' *Handbook* does not have manuscript studies as one of its eighteen chapters though the scribes' efforts are noted at several points; for a recent study of scribal competence see Leonard Neidorf, 'Scribal Errors of Proper Names in the *Beowulf* Manuscript', *ASE* 42 (2013), 249–269. On scribal (in)competence more generally, see Kenneth Sisam, 'The Authority of Old English Poetical Manuscripts', *Studies*, ed. Sisam (1953), 29–44; first printed in *RES* 22 (1946), 257–268. Most recently, all of the chapters in Neidorf, *Reassessment*, regard the poem as early and the manuscript as a poor copy by scribes who barely understood what they were working on, although Thomas A. Bredehoft does note that the poem must have been read in the later period, 'The Date of Composition of *Beowulf* and the Evidence of Metrical Evolution', *Reassessment*, ed. Neidorf (2014), 97–111, at p. 98.
- 5 On why *Beowulf* might have mattered in the late Anglo-Saxon period, see (with strongly divergent views) Damico, *'Beowulf' and the Grendelkin*; Leonard Neidorf, 'VII Æthelred and the Genesis of the *Beowulf* Manuscript', *Philological Quarterly* 89 (2010), 119–140. On *Beowulf* as an example of scribal approaches, see R.D. Fulk, 'The Origin of the Numbered Sections in *Beowulf* and in Other Old English Poems', *ASE* 35 (2006), 91–109; Damian Fleming, 'Ethel-weard: The First Scribe of the *Beowulf* MS', *NM* 105 (2004), 177–186; A.N. Doane, 'Beowulf and Scribal Performance', *Unlocking the Wordhord: Studies in Memory of Edward B. Irving, Jr.*, eds. Mark C. Amodio and Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe (London, 2003), 62–75; Senra, 'Scribal Writing Habits'; Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*; Klegraf, 'Faithful Copying'.

poem.<sup>6</sup> A select group of analyses have discussed common themes or ideas across all five texts.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, new editions and translations of *Beowulf* appear regularly;<sup>8</sup> the other texts are presented somewhat less frequently;<sup>9</sup> and to my knowledge only one edition between the eleventh-century Nowell Codex and the writing of the current volume has brought all five together.<sup>10</sup> What has not

- 6 *St Christopher* has attracted rather less attention than the other texts, but see Joyce Tally Lionarons, 'From Monster to Martyr: The Old English Legend of Saint Christopher', *Marvels, Monsters, and Miracles: Studies in the Medieval and Early Modern Imaginations*, eds. Timothy Jones and David A. Sprunger, *Studies in Medieval Culture* 42 (Kalamazoo, 2002), 167–182; Joe McGowan, 'Readings From the *Beowulf* Manuscript, ff. 94r–98r (the *St. Christopher* Folios)', *Manuscripta* 39 (1995), 26–29; Jill Frederick, "'His ansyn wæs swylce rosan blostma": A Reading of the Old English *Life of St. Christopher*', *Proceedings of the Patristic, Medieval, and Renaissance Conference* 12–13 (1989), 137–148. *Wonders* has been studied more frequently, often in relation to its images and other contemporary incarnations: most recently Ford, *Marvel and Artefact*; Courtney Catherine Barajas, 'Reframing the Monstrous: Visions of Desire and a Unified Christendom in the Anglo-Saxon *Wonders of the East*', *East Meets West in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: Transcultural Experiences in the Premodern World*, ed. Albrecht Classen, *Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture* 14 (Berlin, 2013), pp. 243–261; Mittman and Kim, *Inconceivable Beasts*. On *Alexander*, see Omar Khalaf, 'The Old English *Alexander's Letter to Aristotle*: Monsters and *Hybris* in the Service of Exemplarity', *ES* 94 (2013), 659–667; Orchard, *Companion*, esp. pp. 25–39; Brian McFadden, 'The Social Context of Narrative Disruption in *The Letter of Alexander to Aristotle*', *ASE* 30 (2001), 91–114. *Judith* is widely written on; see most recently Manish Sharma, 'Beyond Nostalgia: Formula and Novelty in Old English Literature', *Exemplaria* 26 (2014), 303–327; Judith Kaup, *The Old English Judith: A Study of Poetic Style, Theological Tradition, and Anglo-Saxon Christian Concepts* (Lampeter, 2013); Ciaran Arthur, 'Postural Representations of Holofernes in the Old English *Judith*: The Lord who was Laid Low', *ES* 94 (2013), 872–882.
- 7 Nicholas Howe, *Writing the Map of Anglo-Saxon England: Essays in Cultural Geography*, (London, 2008), Chapter 6, pp. 151–194; Kathryn Powell, 'Meditating on Men and Monsters: A Reconsideration of the Thematic Unity of the *Beowulf* Manuscript', *RES* 57 (2006), 1–15; Leonie Viljoen, 'The *Beowulf* Manuscript Reconsidered: Reading *Beowulf* in Late Anglo-Saxon England', *Literator* 24 (2003), 39–57; Paul Beecham Taylor and Peter H. Salus, 'The Compilation of Cotton Vitellius A. xv', *NM* 69 (1968), 199–204; Sisam, 'Compilation'.
- 8 The standard edition is Fulk *et al.*, *Klaeber's 'Beowulf'*. Innumerable translations exist; for a recent overview, see Hugh Magennis, *Translating 'Beowulf': Modern Versions in English Verse* (Cambridge, 2011).
- 9 Current standard editions of the other four texts are: Pulsiano, 'Saint Christopher'; the Nowell *Wonders* in Treharne, *Anthology* and the para-text in Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*; *Alexander* in Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*; Griffith, ed., *Judith* (Exeter, 1997).
- 10 R.D. Fulk, ed., *The 'Beowulf' Manuscript: Complete Texts and 'The Fight at Finnsburg'*, *Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library* 3 (London, 2010). Fulk follows Orchard in using the fuller text from Tiberius B. v as his base for *Wonders*. Orchard's *Pride and Prodigies* sets

happened, and what this study seeks to offer, is a full engagement with the manuscript as a single production, intentionally produced by a community working in a particular time and place. In so doing, this discussion attempts to assemble a large number of fragments of evidence and construct a coherent narrative from them while, it is hoped, not straying too far into the realm of speculation.

This kind of study is increasingly common, and it is perhaps surprising that this is the first of its kind to engage with such a well-known codex. The direction of Anglo-Saxon manuscript scholarship has moved away from a focus on where a text came from and towards an interest in how particular texts and manuscripts were used at particular times.<sup>11</sup> In part, this is driven by an increased interest in affective, empathetic scholarship which seeks to consider how individuals perceived and engaged with their world.<sup>12</sup> In part, it is driven by a more abstract interest in the mutations texts go through when used again

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*Wonders* alongside *Alexander* and other related texts. Alongside her full edition of the Nowell *Wonders*, Treharne edits extracts from *Beowulf* and presents a full *Judith* in her *Anthology* at pp. 182–224 and 224–242 respectively. E.V.K. Dobbie edited the poetic texts together as '*Beowulf*' and *Judith*', ASPR IV (London, 1954). Stanley Rypins transcribed the three prose texts in *Three Old English Prose Texts: 'Letter of Alexander the Great', 'Wonders of the East', 'Life of St. Christopher'*, EETS 161 (London, 1924). A new edition of the prose texts is currently being prepared by Joe McGowan, based on his own work and that of the late Phillip Pulsiano.

- 11 Such as Tracey-Anne Cooper, *Monk-Bishops and the English Benedictine Reform Movement* (Toronto, 2015) on London, BL, Cotton MS Tiberius A. iii; Thomas Gobbitt, 'Codicological Features of a Late-Eleventh-Century Manuscript of the Lombard Laws', *Studia Neophilologica* 86 (2014), 48–67, on Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek MS Cod. 471; Karen Louise Jolly, *The Community of St Cuthbert in the Late Tenth Century: The Chester-le-Street Additions to Durham Cathedral Library A.IV.19* (Columbus, OH, 2012); Jonathan Wilcox, 'The Use of Ælfric's Homilies: MSS Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 85 and 86 in the Field', *A Companion to Ælfric*, eds. Hugh Magennis and Mary Swan, *Companions to the Christian Tradition* 18 (Leiden, 2009), 345–368; Benjamin C. Withers, *The Illustrated Old English Hexateuch, Cotton MS Claudius B.IV: The Frontier of Seeing and Reading in Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 2007). For manuscripts as unique performances see e.g. Kate Maxwell, 'Guillaume De Machaut and the *Mise En Page* of Medieval French Sung Verse' (unpubl. PhD dissertation, University of Glasgow, 2009), esp. pp. 220–226. On manuscript studies in general, see Richard Gameson, ed., *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain Volume 1 c.400–1100* (Cambridge, 2012), the collective chapters of which form a textbook for Anglo-Saxon book production; see also the older pieces brought together in Jane Roberts and Pamela Robinson, eds., *The History of the Book in the West: 400AD–1455 Volume 1* (Farnham, 2010).
- 12 See e.g. the introduction to Jolly, *Community of St. Cuthbert*; on empathetic criticism more broadly see Diane Watt, 'Critics, Communities and Compassionate Criticism: Learning



in new contexts: the argument made most pithily by Donald Scragg that “what happens to a text is just as interesting, ultimately, as where it came from”.<sup>13</sup> This drive to assess individual scribes’ conceptions of meaning and its production can be seen as an attempt, in Malcolm Parkes’ words, to see “[t]hrough the eyes of scribes and readers”.<sup>14</sup> Rather, then, than seeing an imperfect record of texts, to which an archaeological approach must be taken, this study analyses the Nowell Codex as an edition, in which text selection and presentational choices offer a valid record of the creation of meaning, and in which what seem to be flaws can offer evidence of contemporary interpretations or approaches.<sup>15</sup> The methodological challenge is to combine the different techniques of formal manuscript analysis such as palaeography and codicology with aesthetic critiques of literary and artistic interpretation.<sup>16</sup> Leonard Boyle has argued that “[a]ny mark or drawing or correction or illustration or erasure in a manuscript is part of the history of the transmission of a text and should be recorded and, if necessary, justified and explained.”<sup>17</sup> I do not attempt to meet Boyle’s standard here, but I do seek to engage with every action taken in the making of the codex that can reasonably be seen as deliberate: key to this approach is the principle that scribes were people, whose levels of skill, interest and engagement can be identified from their interactions with a manuscript, and that this

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from *The Book of Margery Kempe*, *Maistresse of my Wit: Medieval Women, Modern Scholarship*, eds. Louise D’Arcens and Juanita Ruys (Turnhout, 2007), 191–210.

- 13 Donald G. Scragg, ‘Ælfric’s Scribes’, *Essays for Joyce Hill on her Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Mary Swan, Leeds Studies in English n.s. 37 (Leeds, 2006), 179–189, at p. 186.
- 14 M.B. Parkes, *Their Hands Before Our Eyes: A Closer Look at Scribes. The Lyell Lectures delivered in the University of Oxford 1999* (Aldershot, 2008), title to Chapter 8, pp. 127–145.
- 15 See especially Michelle Brown’s arguments in ‘Mercian Manuscripts: The Implications of the Staffordshire Hoard, Other Recent Discoveries, and the “New Materiality”’, *Writing in Context: Insular Manuscript Culture 500–1200*, ed. Erik Kwakkel (Leiden, 2013), 23–64; *The Book and the Transformation of Britain c. 550–1050: A Study in Written and Visual Literacy and Orality*, The Sanders Lectures in Bibliography 103, Cambridge University Library, 2009 (London, 2011); ‘The Triumph of the Codex: The Manuscript Book Before 1100’, *A Companion to the History of the Book*, eds. Simon Eliot and Jonathan Rose (Oxford, 2007), 179–193; cf. Erik Kwakkel, ‘Writing in Context: Introduction’, *Writing in Context*, ed. Kwakkel (2013), 15–20, at p. 15; cf. Gobbitt, ‘Lombard Laws’ pp. 59 & 64–65; Thomas Gobbitt, ‘The Manuscript Contexts of the Old English *frīð* of Ælfred and Guðrum’, *Manuscripta* 57 (2013), 29–56, at p. 36.
- 16 Cf. Francis Newton, ‘A Giant Among Scribes: Colophon and Ideological Programme in the Eadui Gospels’, *Writing in Context*, ed. Kwakkel (2013), 127–149, at p. 129; Brown, ‘Mercian Manuscripts’, p. 29; David Ganz, ‘Editorial Palaeography: One Teacher’s Suggestions’, in *Gazette du livre médiéval* 16 (1990), 17–20, esp. pp. 18–19.
- 17 Leonard E. Boyle O.P., *Vox Paginæ: An Oral Dimension of Texts* (Rome, 1999), pp. 31–32.

can in turn tell us something about what a manuscript was intended for.<sup>18</sup> This includes considering scribal corrections; their use of punctuation and decoration; the images; and the selection and placement of the texts themselves. Some of this evidence, along with examples of non-scribal interactions, is used to consider readings of the Nowell Codex, though this is of necessity more tentative.<sup>19</sup>

While a relatively old idea in literary studies, this interest in individual incarnations and uses of texts – in ‘variance’ rather than a single truth – has been revived by, paradoxically, study of both old and new media.<sup>20</sup> The internet is seen by some to return us to some aspects of a pre-print textual culture,

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- 18 Key examples are Julia Crick, ‘Script and the Sense of the Past in Anglo-Saxon England’, *Anglo-Saxon Traces*, eds. Jane Roberts and Pamela Robinson, MRTS 405, *Essays in Anglo-Saxon Studies* 4 (Tempe, AZ, 2011), 1–30; Sharon Rowley, *The Old English Version of Bede’s ‘Historia Ecclesiastica’* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 157–173; Matthew T. Hussey, ‘Anglo-Saxon Scribal *habitus* and Frankish Aesthetics in an Early Uncial Manuscript’, *Scraped, Stroked, and Bound: Materially Engaged Readings of Medieval Manuscripts*, ed. Jonathan Wilcox, USML 23 (Turnhout, 2013), 15–37; Patrick W. Conner, ‘On the Nature of Matched Scribal Hands’, *Scraped, Stroked, and Bound*, ed. Wilcox (2013), 39–73; Richard Gameson, ‘The Scribe Speaks? Colophons in Early English manuscripts’, H.M. Chadwick Memorial Lectures 12 (Cambridge, 2002); Katherine O’Brien O’Keeffe, *Visible Song: Transitional Literacy in Old English Verse*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England 4 (Cambridge, 1990). For a similar discussion of later medieval scribal engagement with their texts see Matthew Fisher, *Scribal Authorship and the Writing of History in Medieval England* (Columbus, OH, 2012).
- 19 On Anglo-Saxon reading see Malcolm Parkes, ‘*Rædan, areccan, smeagan*: How the Anglo-Saxons Read’, *ASE* 26 (1997), 1–22; C.P. Wormald, ‘The Uses of Literacy in Anglo-Saxon England and its Neighbours’, in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series 27 (1977), 95–114; Rosamund McKitterick, ed., *The Uses of Literacy in Early Mediaeval Europe* (Cambridge, 1990). On medieval literacy more broadly, see M. . Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066–1307* (Oxford, 1979; 2012 third edition); Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton, 1983).
- 20 For ‘variance’ see Bernard Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant: A Critical History of Philology*, trans. Betsy Wing (London, 1999), first published as *Éloge de la variante: Histoire critique de la philologie* (Paris, 1989); cf. S.C. Thomson, ‘“Whistle While You Work”: Scribal Engagement with Old English Poetic Texts’, *Sensory Perception in the Medieval West*, eds. S.C. Thomson and M.D.J. Bintley, USML 34 (Turnhout, 2016), 99–122; Graham D. Caie and Denis Renevey, ‘Introduction’, *Medieval Texts in Context*, eds. Graham D. Caie and Denis Renevey (Abingdon, 2008), 1–9. For applications of these principles to individual manuscripts see Gobbitt, ‘Lombard Laws’; Wilcox, ‘Junius 85 and 86’. On ‘old media’ as the product of individual minds and bodies, see Richard Sennet’s seminal *The Craftsman* (London, 2008); for some of these ideas as applied to medieval manuscripts see e.g. Jeffrey

where individuals and texts interact freely, each changing and re-presenting the other.<sup>21</sup> Whether this is the case or not, it is certainly true that digital technology makes study of individual incarnations of medieval texts significantly easier. The level of detail presented here would simply not have been possible without the digital facsimiles of the Nowell Codex.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, digital facsimiles and images, along with web-based tools, have been crucial in enabling comparisons with other manuscripts which underpin my attempt to set the Nowell Codex in some form of cultural context.<sup>23</sup> Digital tools do, though, have their limitations, and it is important to note that, in the same manner as we do not yet comprehend fully what we can do with them, we are just as often unaware of what they prevent us from doing. First-hand examination of a manuscript remains key to any serious engagement with it, both to

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F. Hamburger, *Script as Image*, Corpus of Illuminated Manuscripts 21 (Leuven, 2014); Wilcox, ed., *Scraped, Stroked, and Bound*.

- 21 On the digital study of manuscripts, see Jonathan Wilcox, 'The Sensory Cost of Remediation, or, Sniffing in the Gutter of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts', *Sensory Perception*, eds. Thomson and Bintley (2016), 27–52, esp. pp. 35–40; cf. Thomas Bredehoft's Epilogue to *Visible Text: Textual Production and Reproduction from 'Beowulf' to 'Maus'* (Oxford, 2014), pp. 157–168.
- 22 Kiernan, *Electronic 'Beowulf'* 3.0; British Library, *Digitised Manuscripts*. Malone, *Nowell Codex*, is a print facsimile of the full manuscript. *Wonders* exists in numerous separate facsimiles: Mittman and Kim, *Inconceivable Beasts*; Patrick McGurk, D.N. Dumville, M.R. Godden, and Ann Elizabeth Knock, eds., *An Eleventh-Century Anglo-Saxon Illustrated Miscellany (British Library Cotton Tiberius B.v Part 1)*, EEMF 21 (Copenhagen, 1983); M.R. James, ed., *The 'Marvels of the East': A Full Reproduction of the Three Known Copies, with Introduction and Notes* (Oxford, 1929). Julius Zupitza, ed., *'Beowulf' Reproduced in Facsimile from the Unique Manuscript British Museum Ms. Cotton Vitellius A. xv*, second edition with a new reproduction and introductory note by Norman Davis, EETS 77 (London, 1882; 1959 second edition), is a full facsimile of that poem.
- 23 Along with digitised images, the most important digital tools in the production of this study have been Peter Stokes and Stewart Brookes' *DigiPal: Digital Resource and Database of Manuscripts, Palaeography and Diplomatic* (2011–14), online at <<http://www.digipal.eu/>>, last accessed 16/7/16; the *Electronic Sawyer Online Catalogue of Anglo-Saxon Charters*, online at <<http://www.esawyer.org.uk/about/index.html>>, last accessed 19/5/16. See Wilcox, 'Sniffing in the Gutter' for an up-to-date review of current electronic images of manuscripts. In addition to the British Library's *Digitised Manuscripts* site, I have particularly relied upon *Parker Library on the Web* (CCC Cambridge with Stanford University Library and Cambridge University Library), online (subscription needed) at <<https://parker.stanford.edu/>>, online since October 2009, last accessed 19/5/16; *Early Manuscripts at Oxford University* (University of Oxford), online at <<http://image.ox.ac.uk/show-all-op-enings?collection=bodleian&manuscript=msjunius11>>, last accessed 27/1/16; *Princeton University Digital Library*, online at <<http://pudl.princeton.edu/>>, last accessed 16/7/16.

comprehend it as a physical artefact and – somewhat more pragmatically – to correct misapprehensions from images which, for all the superb detail available, remain one-dimensional and static.<sup>24</sup>

My awareness of the Nowell Codex as a communal and deliberate production came slowly. It was greatly sharpened by a number of other studies which have shed light on how scribes worked with one another and with artists, along with discussions that explore the nature of communal life in Anglo-Saxon England.<sup>25</sup> Much of this comes from study of key figures from the period and broader historical analysis.<sup>26</sup> Given the difficulties in dating the Nowell Codex, I have sought to avoid tying my discussion to particular times and places. Indeed, in Chapter 6, comparable scribal projects are discussed from both within and outside the accepted dating for its production. It would be unnecessarily cautious to avoid commenting on dating altogether, but the connections I make with the cultural context of Cnut's reign in Chapter 1 and with the scribal environment in and around Archbishop Wulfstan's Mercia in

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- 24 I am grateful to Julian Harrison, Cillian O'Hogan, and Andrea Clarke for enabling me to examine Vitellius A. xv on 18/3/15. On the limitations of digital images, see Wilcox, 'Sniffing in the Gutters', and his 'Introduction: The Philology of Smell', *Scraped, Stroked and Bound*, ed. Wilcox (2013), 1–13.
- 25 On engaging with the atmosphere of communal life see e.g. Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images 400–1200* (Cambridge, 1998); Jerome Bertram's introduction to *The Chrodegang Rules: The Rules for the Common Life of the Secular Clergy from the Eighth and Ninth Centuries. Critical Texts with Translations and Commentary* (Aldershot, 2005). More specifically on scribal communities, see my discussion in Chapter 6, but also Conner, 'Matched Scribal Hands'; Gobbitt, 'Manuscript Contexts of the Old English *frið*'; Richard Gameson, 'Anglo-Saxon Scribes and Scriptoria', *History of the Book*, ed. Gameson (2012), 94–120; Jolly, *Community of St. Cuthbert*.
- 26 Archbishop Wulfstan is a key example. See e.g. Richard Gameson, 'Book Production and Decoration at Worcester in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries', *St Oswald of Worcester: Life and Influence*, eds. Nicholas Brooks and Catherine Cubitt, *Studies in the Early History of Britain. The Makers of England II* (London, 1996), 194–243 at e.g. pp. 209–210, 227–228; Gareth Mann, 'The Development of Wulfstan's Alcuin Manuscripts', *Wulfstan, Archbishop of York: The Proceedings of the Second Alcuin Conference*, ed. Matthew Townend, *Studies in the Early Middle Ages 10* (Turnhout, 2004), 235–278 at e.g. p. 268; T.A. Heslop, 'Art and the Man: Archbishop Wulfstan and the York Gospelbook', *Wulfstan*, ed. Townend (2004), 279–308, at pp. 295–297; Neil Ker, 'The Handwriting of Archbishop Wulfstan', N.R. Ker, *Books, Collectors and Libraries: Studies in the Medieval Heritage*, ed. Andrew G. Watson (London, 1985), 9–26. As a slightly later example, on St. Wulfstan, bishop of Worcester, see Richard Gameson, 'St Wulfstan, the Library of Worcester, and the Spirituality of the Medieval Book', *St Wulfstan and His World*, eds. Julia S. Barrow and N.P. Brooks (Aldershot, 2005), 59–104, esp. pp. 60–61. On the role of manuscripts as a tool for authority and culture see most significantly T.A. Heslop, 'The Production of *de luxe* Manuscripts and the Patronage of King Cnut and Queen Emma', *ASE* 19 (1990), 151–195.

Chapter 2 do not need to be followed for the other, more significant, discussions of methodology and of what meanings the manuscript held for its scribes to register. It is the process of production and the thinking demonstrated thereby that interests me more than precisely when and where it happened. Part of the joy of studying such a text in such a culture is the relentless presence of other possibilities: the starting of conversations, not their termination.

There remain, then, (far) more unknowns than knowns. While it is possible to speculate on some likely types and themes, which other texts surrounded our extant pieces is another unknown and were the truth ever discovered, it would be likely to alter significantly my intertextual readings as presented in Chapter 1. Who wrote the manuscript (including their gender) is barely even worthy of speculation at the current state of knowledge. When and where they wrote it is, as I argue in Chapter 2, the work of triangulation and informed guesswork rather than tightly determined: I propose that, in 1563, the manuscript may have come to Laurence Nowell from Lichfield. This is expressed as tentatively as possible; the uncertainty I profess is, itself, counter to some prevailing arguments about the dating of texts and manuscripts. Many of the recent arguments about the impossibility of *Beowulf* being composed in the tenth or eleventh century have stated their cases so forcefully as to suggest that it would have been a cultural irrelevance by the time it was recorded in this manuscript by two hard-working individuals.<sup>27</sup> We can have no certainties about what meanings it contained nor for whom, but it will, I hope, be clear that some people valued *Beowulf* and the texts chosen to accompany it.

Indeed, I suggest that there are numerous (if slight) indications of pre-modern interest in the manuscript. Such interactions are most prominent in *Wonders*, probably because the illustrated text was intrinsically most interesting. A Middle English hand transcribed a number of the words on 99(95) (BL102)v, an undateable hand imitated some drawings on 98(100) (BL101)r, and another undateable, possibly the same, hand imitated scribal forms on 95(97) (BL98)v.<sup>28</sup> The other texts of the codex show some indications of being read: as shown in Appendix 4, *Alexander* has three *f*-shaped marks which may

27 See the various pieces in Neidorf, *Reassessment* (2014), especially Leonard Neidorf, 'Germanic Legend, Scribal Errors, and Cultural Change', 37–57, at e.g. p. 56; and Megan E. Hartman, 'The Limits of Conservative Composition in Old English Poetry', 79–96.

28 See also Jane A. Leake, 'Middle English Glosses in the *Beowulf*-Codex', *Modern Language Quarterly* 23 (1962), 229–232; Malone, *Nowell Codex*, p. 37; Kiernan, 'Beowulf' Manuscript, n.53 p. 143. The glossed page is shown in Roberts, *Guide to Scripts*, p. 63. It is not clear what the imitating hand intended to imitate; Pulsiano's notes suggest '8o' which is reasonable based on the forms but bears no relation to the context; *ha* in imitation of scribal *hatte* immediately below is perhaps possible; see also Mittman and Kim, *Inconceivable Beasts*, p. 161.

be by a scribe or reader or a combination of the two, which are closely paralleled in London, BL, Cotton Nero A. i, fols. 70–177; it also has the marks of another doodler on its final page, working in drypoint. It is probable, as argued in Chapter 5, that a late Anglo-Saxon hand, or possibly one later still, sought to restore some parts of the text towards the end of *Beowulf*; 164 (BL167)v has what is likely to be an Anglo-Saxon reader's annotation in the margin; a number of corrections, particularly in Scribe B's stint, seem to be by another hand who is perhaps not entirely competent as a reader of Old English. My discussion does not aim to account for every mark in this manuscript, but some are considered in more detail where they are relevant to disentangling its original composition (in Chapter 2), or where they can shed other light on how it was used or treated in its pre-modern existence (in Appendix 4).

This volume opens by (re)introducing the texts of the Nowell Codex. This leads into suggesting some ways in which they could be read with and against one another. Some key ideas proposed are the presentation of foreign adventurers in English, of the balance of threats and opportunities offered by outsiders, of the relative weakness of military strength as a method of governance and control, and of irony and reversal. Some particular correspondences can be seen between *Beowulf* and *Judith*, and the parallels that have been discussed elsewhere between *Beowulf*, *Alexander*, and Blickling Homily xvi are noted. These echoes could all be discussed in more detail; no doubt many others could be identified. The intention of the discussion is to suggest the productive nature of reading these texts together. A number of these readings work most effectively in the kind of cultural context we know existed in England from 1016, but it is far from necessary to accept this connection to find the intertextual readings productive.

Chapter 2 details the original contents and process of construction of the Nowell Codex. In a pattern that will become familiar, to do so requires a great deal of detailed discussion of numerous minor points in order to arrive at a clear – if still speculative – narrative. Some key issues of date and production are and probably always will be 'known unknowns', though the cumulative weight of evidence from different sources seems to me to suggest production in Mercia closer to 1020 than to 1000. More important for the overall analysis and for understanding of the process and community that produced the manuscript, the key suggestions here are that (at least) three exemplars were brought together in an ambitious and creative project to unite some relatively recent hagiographical texts (*Judith*, *St Christopher*, and others) with some older heroic narratives (*Alexander* and *Beowulf*), using *Wonders* to connect these two worlds.

The third chapter focuses on Nowell's presentation of *Wonders*. It is supported by the first two appendices, which list the sections and illustrations of the text respectively for ease of reference. This follows several recent re-evaluations of this manuscript's presentation of the text in finding it more interesting than earlier readings. More significantly for the overall direction of my argument, I find it beyond reasonable doubt that two different artists worked on the images here. Other hands probably worked on the colours and frames, though this is less certain. It also seems likely that more than one exemplar was used for the image scheme, and that at least one of the images was newly created for this copy. These findings supplement the suggestions made in Chapter 2 that this was an ambitious project, executed by a community with a clear vision in mind, and delivered by a team which varied in competence.

Chapters 4 and 5 respectively discuss the work of each of the two scribes. The study aims to identify conscious choices that have been made in the process of copying the texts. This is not straightforward and requires use of a large amount of often contradictory material and different methodologies. The chapters seek to describe each scribe's activity, focusing on formation of letters, use of decoration and punctuation (including capitalisation), orthography, and corrections made. As in Chapter 2, the intention here is to present a wide range of evidence from which some plausible suggestions can be made. This leads to an overall narrative of intentional and thoughtful engagement, with consistent efforts to reflect exemplar forms in terms of orthography and decorative features. The Nowell Codex continues to look like an ambitious project engaged with actively and creatively, but not entirely competently.

Finally, Chapter 6 seeks to place this kind of communal and creative project in the context of scribal activity in late Anglo-Saxon England. Some case studies of manuscripts from the tenth and eleventh centuries are discussed, some similar and many rather different. The intention is to present my own investigations as merely a case study: just one instance that opens questions about Anglo-Saxon manuscript culture, readership, and meaning making. But this volume also aspires to propose the Nowell Codex as a particularly significant and interesting act of communal creativity, finding that it consciously re-presented *Beowulf* in a new context, inviting the audience to rediscover an old text in new ways and making the case for that poem as almost infinitely flexible; then as now a persistently re-visioned and re-presented text.

## (Re)Introducing the Texts of the Nowell Codex

Some of the five texts of the Nowell Codex are more familiar than others, and by modern estimations they vary considerably in quality. Indeed, not all scholars are certain that all five were elements within a single production. Chapter 2 reviews the codicological evidence to support the prevailing consensus on the collection's likely original unity. Before that technical discussion, this chapter seeks briefly to introduce each text, and to suggest some readings that could result from their combination in the likely context of their production. The eleventh-century creators and users of the manuscript would also have known some of the texts rather better than the others though for them, unlike modern readers, *Beowulf* is most likely to have been the stranger at the party. *St Christopher*'s life circulated widely in both Latin and Old English forms as well as being told in the *Old English Martyrology*.<sup>1</sup> The Old English translation of *Wonders* exists in the slightly later London, BL, Cotton MS Tiberius B. v alongside a Latin version which circulated extremely widely on the Continent and was likely also well-known in England; a later copy of the Latin text is in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley MS 614.<sup>2</sup> *Alexander* is a translation of another widely circulating Latin text: although the only Latin manuscript from this period is London, BL, Royal MS 13 A. i, with the *Epistola Alexandri* at folios 51v to 78r, Alexander was a popular figure in a wide range of texts; he appears three times in the Nowell *Wonders*.<sup>3</sup> While the poetic version appears uniquely in this manuscript, the Book of Judith was frequently retold in the Anglo-Saxon period: Aldhelm (d. 709 or 710) included the heroine in both prose and poetic *De virginitate*; Alcuin of York (d. 804) includes lines from the Vulgate account in *De laude Dei*; Ælfric of Eynsham composed a homily based on the Vulgate version of her story around 1000.<sup>4</sup> In fact, the only one of the five extant

1 Christine Rauer, ed., *The Old English Martyrology: Edition, Translation, and Commentary* (Cambridge, 2013).

2 The most recent study is Ford, *Marvel and Artefact*. For a facsimile of all three texts see McGurk et al., *Eleventh-Century Illustrated Miscellany*.

3 Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 116–139.

4 *De virginitate* is translated in Michael Lapidge and Michael Herren, trans. & eds., *Aldhelm: The Prose Works* (Cambridge, 1979), with Judith at pp. 126–127; *Carmen de Virginitate* is in Michael Lapidge and James Rosier, trans. & eds., *Aldhelm. The Poetic Works* (Cambridge, 1985), translated by James Rosier pp. 97–170, with Judith at p. 159. Richard Marsden lists the verses used by Alcuin in *The Text of the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 1995),



narratives not known in another form, and not known to have circulated as a Latin text in late Anglo-Saxon England, is *Beowulf*. This is not to say that it was necessarily obscure: there are echoes and analogues in a number of different places.<sup>5</sup> But Leonard Neidorf has argued strongly that the form of heroism the poem engages with was not a “living tradition” within the culture by the tenth and eleventh centuries, and it is a noteworthy irony that the longest text, which is by some distance the most well-known and celebrated of the five now, was probably the most obscure of them when it was reproduced here.<sup>6</sup>

Precisely why these five texts were brought together is still unclear, and probably always will be. In 1953, Kenneth Sisam proposed that a later medieval cataloguer seeking to classify the manuscript might reasonably have described it as “Liber de diversis monstis, anglice” (“A book of various monsters, in English”).<sup>7</sup> This remains the closest both to a suggestion of what the producers of the codex thought they were doing and to an accepted common theme. Orchard modified it, suggesting that the inclusion of the monster-less *Judith* and all of the texts’ interest in remarkable men makes the manuscript less focused on monsters and more about “pride and prodigies”; a modification to his work has in turn been suggested by Kathryn Powell, suggesting a particular focus on rulers and how they function.<sup>8</sup> Nicholas Howe, while accepting a “deep interest in and expert knowledge of monsters” in the codex, has argued that place and an interest in “elsewhere” is more significant as an overriding idea,<sup>9</sup> and in 2003, Leonie Viljoen made some interesting points about inter-textual resonances.<sup>10</sup> Despite all of these investigations, Scragg has recently argued that “a credible common theme in the items of the *Beowulf* manuscript

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at p. 224. See also his comments on Aldhelm’s use of Judith at p. 66. For Ælfric’s homily, see Stuart Lee, ed., *Ælfric’s Homilies on ‘Judith’, ‘Esther’, and the ‘Maccabees’* at <<http://users.ox.ac.uk/~stuart/kings/>>, online since 1999, last visited 22/2/16. Lee follows Peter Clemoes in dating the text to 1002–05; Clemoes expresses this view in ‘The Chronology of Ælfric’s Works’ *Anglo-Saxons: Studies in Some Aspects of Their History and Culture Presented to Bruce Dickins*, ed. Peter Clemoes (London, 1959), 212–247. The most recent full study is Kaup, *Old English ‘Judith’*, with discussion of the patristic background and non-poetic Anglo-Saxon treatments of the text as Chapter 2, pp. 25–92.

5 See Chapter 6 for an instance from London, BL, Harley MS 208.

6 Neidorf, ‘Germanic Legend’, pp. 52–56; quotation from p. 53.

7 ‘Compilation’, p. 96.

8 *Pride and Prodigies*; Powell, ‘Men and Monsters’.

9 Howe, *Writing the Map*, Chapter 6, ‘Books of Elsewhere: Cotton Tiberius B v and Cotton Vitellius A xv’, pp. 151–194.

10 Viljoen, ‘*Beowulf* Manuscript Reconsidered’.

has so far eluded scholars”, and proposes his own reading of the collection as rather broadly offering “material for moral contemplation.”<sup>11</sup>

It would be foolish to re-tread ground trodden by so many distinguished scholars in the expectation of a new result, but perhaps less so to suggest that the question has been asked in the wrong way. The Nowell Codex may not be a riddle waiting for a single answer; perhaps it was not intended to have one. Bernard Muir has argued for the Exeter Book as an ‘anthology’ consciously made out of the arrangement of pre-existing texts “in a meaningful manner.”<sup>12</sup> He finds themes being developed and explored in sequences of texts, with the implication that more productive readings of various groups and of the relationships between those groups await further careful engagements. A similar, if more practical, proposition is made by Tracey-Anne Cooper. She suggests that London, BL, Cotton MS Tiberius A. iii, often regarded as a fairly random miscellany, is best seen as bringing together a collection of texts that would be useful for a “monastic episcopacy” who used texts in a “dynamic, open and fluid” way.<sup>13</sup> That is, the unity of the whole is based on the idea that texts interlock with one another, subtly modifying meanings – rather like Judith Kaup’s conception of the poem *Judith*, which she sees as making meaning through “interconnections” rather than a “rigid framework.”<sup>14</sup> Similarly, Jonathan Wilcox identifies many “minute changes” to the Ælfrician homily on the First Sunday in Lent in Junius 85 and 86, with the meaning of the text altered by both its intertextual context and its presentation therein, resulting in the production of textual resonances throughout the manuscript which make the audience “prick up their ears” rather than concrete connections being drawn.<sup>15</sup> This makes manuscripts such as Junius 11, which offers a clear progression of biblical narratives, the exception rather than the rule.<sup>16</sup> We can, then, regard

11 Scragg, ‘Old English Homiliaries and Poetic Manuscripts’, *History of the Book*, ed. Gameson (2012), 553–561, at p. 556.

12 *The Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry: An Edition of Exeter Dean and Chapter MS 3501*, 2 vols. (Exeter, 2000, second edition), vol. 1, p. 7; discussed in more detail pp. 16–25, esp. pp. 23–25.

13 Cooper, *Monk-Bishops*, pp. 5 and 11, with these principles discussed clearly pp. 1–12. Compare the discussions of Ælfric manuscripts in Aaron J. Kleist, ‘Assembling Ælfric: Reconstructing the Rationale Behind Eleventh and Twelfth-Century Compilations’, *Companion to Ælfric*, eds. Magennis and Swan (2009), 369–398.

14 Kaup, *Old English Judith*, discussed pp. 95–99 with quotations from p. 97.

15 Wilcox, ‘Junius 85 and 86’, quotations from pp. 366 and 365 respectively; see also pp. 360–361.

16 Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius MS 11 contains a composite *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Daniel*, and *Christ and Satan*. The most recent facsimile is B.J. Muir, ed., with N. Kennedy,

literary collections like the Nowell Codex as “dynamic, ludic entities”, offering a play of meanings within and between different texts and in which variant ideas may be simultaneously present.<sup>17</sup> I have argued elsewhere that this has more in common with art-historical critiques of Anglo-Saxon culture, and indeed with the modern theory of collage, than with some literary analyses.<sup>18</sup> The subsequent discussion, then, is not intended to be a conclusive statement of the meaning of the Nowell Codex – quite the reverse – but to open up possibilities and invite reflection on how texts made meanings in the eleventh century.

### *The Passion of Saint Christopher*

The story of St Christopher as known in this period is relatively simple, though easily embellished. Christopher comes from a race of *healfhundingas* or *Cynocephali*: a tribe of humans who have the heads of dogs, usually eat human flesh, and often have other monstrous characteristics such as great height, tusks, and burning eyes. They live somewhere in north Africa. Alone among them, Christopher comes to know God and receives the gift of speech. News of the strange creature comes to a city through a woman who visited its outskirts, and the pagan king Dagnus, sometimes merged into the historical emperor Decius, demands the bizarre sight to be brought before him.<sup>19</sup> Soldiers go to fetch either the living being, or just his head, and he comes with them willingly. Christopher begins to preach and converts many people – including the soldiers and two prostitutes – whose disobedience is marked by their refusal to perform sacrifices to the gods.<sup>20</sup> The converts are executed and Dagnus turns to torturing Christopher, demanding that he sacrifice to the pagan gods. In the course of his tortures, arrows shot at the bound Christopher stand in mid-air and, after a period of time, turn on the king. Dagnus is himself blinded, but

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programming, *A Digital Facsimile of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 11* (Oxford, 2005); images are also online in Oxford University's Early Manuscripts at Oxford University, <<http://image.ox.ac.uk/show-all-openings?collection=bodleian&manuscript=msjunius11>>, online since 1995, last accessed 27/1/16.

17 Prof. Andrew Burn, pers. corr., 25/11/14.

18 S.C. Thomson, 'Making an Old Text New: Reading *Beowulf* in an Eleventh-Century Collage' (unpublished).

19 Trajan Decius reigned from 249–251 AD and was known for his persecution of Christians in an attempt to enforce pantheistic orthodoxy through public sacrifices.

20 The city is not named in Nowell, but is consistently named as Samos in Latin texts, and in the fragmentary version in Otho B. x.

has Christopher executed anyway. Following Christopher's instructions, earth from the site of his tortures is mixed with his blood and rubbed into Dagnus' eyes, restoring his sight. The king is converted.

The Nowell text now starts in the middle of Christopher's torture, about two-thirds of the way through the narrative, and with little indication of his monstrous nature. As most contemporary versions, including all insular accounts, describe him as dog-headed, and the Nowell Dagnus sets up a special bench "twelf fæðma lang" ("twelve fathoms long") for him, he was certainly large and there is no reason to assume he was not also described as monstrous in the lost opening. A parallel race, without an anomalous Christian individual, is described and illustrated in *Wonders* and mentioned in *Alexander*.<sup>21</sup> The *Old English Martyrology* provides a similar account, giving Christopher and his kin thick hair and boars' tusks.<sup>22</sup> Another striking feature of Christopher in the *Martyrology* is that his "eagan scinon swa leohte swa morgensteorra" ("eyes shone as brightly as the morning star"). This is similar to another humanoid creature in *Wonders*, whose "eagan scinað swa leohte swa man micel blacern onæle on þystre nihte" ("eyes shine as brightly as though a man had lit a great lantern on a dark night").<sup>23</sup> While illustrated, the top half of the head along with its shining eyes is unfortunately missing. This, and Christopher, have been compared with Grendel whose eyes also shine, though perhaps in a less wholesome manner:

him of eagem stod  
ligge gelicost leoht unfæger.<sup>24</sup>

*from his eyes came an eerie light, most like a flame.*

It is also worth noting that the most dramatic narrative moment still in the Nowell Codex *St Christopher*, when the arrows turn on Dagnus, has a parallel in Blickling Homily xvi, on the dedication of St Michael's Church.<sup>25</sup> The text is set in southern Italy, in Apulia, on the mountainous Gargano peninsula. According

21 97(99) (BL100)r.10–19, §7. For folio references to the Nowell Codex, see "Terms Used," above. For sectional divisions in *Wonders*, see Appendix 1.

22 Rauer, *Old English Martyrology*, pp. 90–91.

23 101 (BL104)r–v.18–2, §22.

24 146 (BL148)v.8–9; *Beowulf* lines 726b–27.

25 The homily is §xvii in Richard Morris, ed., *The Blickling Homilies of the Tenth Century*, 3 volumes, EETS 58, 63 & 73 (London, 1874–80, repr. in one volume 1967), but is now §xvi in Richard Kelly, ed. and trans., *The Blickling Homilies*, 2 vols. (London, 2003–09).

to the homily, the mountain was named after a man called Garganus.<sup>26</sup> Wealthy Garganus owns a bull which, like St Christopher, is divinely inspired to wander from its herd. Furious, Garganus shoots an arrow at it, but a gust of wind shoots it back into his face, killing him. In this context, the more general resonances of the ideas of the narrative are also of interest: an individual journey into the wilderness; man's control over himself and nature; isolation; the subversion of worldly power.

This curious connection may supplement a similarity between another passage in the same homily and Hrothgar's description of the Mere in *Beowulf* which was identified long ago.<sup>27</sup> The relevant passage is a coda to the main homily and is a vernacular version of the *Visio sancti Pauli*: a fourth-century account of St Paul's vision of souls tormented in hell. The correspondences have been closely studied, and the usual view is now that both poem and translated vision drew on a common source.<sup>28</sup> Orchard has found parallels between the language used in Homily XVI, *Alexander*, and Hrothgar's 'sermon' in *Beowulf* (lines 1700–1784). Of course, as Orchard also makes clear, it is almost certain that the translator of *Alexander* used *Beowulf*, and may thereby have inadvertently reflected some of the language used in the sermon. And there should be no surprises in parallels being found between Hrothgar's 'sermon' and the homily as the text types are so closely related. It may also be worth noting in this context the somewhat unusual description of the hell into which Holofernes is thrust in *Judith*, "under neowelne næs" (113a: "under the hateful cliff"). The idea of a cliff is justified by neither scriptural source nor narrative context and the potential echo of Blickling and *Beowulf* is clear; Donald Fry's influential argument, though, would assign all three to an Anglo-Saxon literary convention of the 'Cliff of Death'.<sup>29</sup> This set of literary resemblances stands alongside correspondences between the two manuscripts: both have a similar

26 Marian Elena Ruggerini discusses its origins in 'St Michael and the Dragon from Scripture to Hagiography', *Monsters and the Monstrous in Medieval Northwest Europe*, eds. Karin E. Olsen and L.A.J.R. Houwen (Leuven, 2001), 23–58, at pp. 36–38, n. 42.

27 The correspondence was first noted by Morris, *Blickling Homilies*, p. vii. See Richard North's discussion, which I follow here, in *The Origins of 'Beowulf': From Vergil to Wiglaf* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 94–96.

28 As described by Peter Clemoes, a "quasi-Latin, quasi-vernacular, tradition known to them alike", *Interactions of Thought and Language in Old English Poetry* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 25.

29 Donald Fry, 'The Cliff of Death in Old English Poetry', *Comparative Research on Oral Traditions: A Memorial for Milman Parry*, ed. John Miles Foley (Columbus, OH, 1987), 213–234. See Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 41–42; the image in *Judith* is discussed with reference to Fry by Lori Ann Garner, 'The Art of Translation in the Old English *Judith*', *Studia Neophilologica* 73 (2001), 171–183 at pp. 176–178.

pairing of scribal hands with perhaps some other shared physical features.<sup>30</sup> However, there are no striking similarities that cannot be seen elsewhere; it remains probable that the echoes identified between the two manuscripts simply speak to a common literary and manuscript culture rather than any more significant relationship.

Be that as it may, there are versions of the Christopher legend from the Anglo-Saxon period in a number of Latin manuscripts as well as the ninth-century *Old English Martyrology*, where Christopher's feast day is 28 April.<sup>31</sup> There is also an Irish translation written down in the fifteenth century, but probably made in the eleventh or twelfth.<sup>32</sup> All of these give a full account of the story, some with individual expansions or other idiosyncrasies. The *Martyrology* and Irish recensions are both engaging narratives, and clearly supplement our understanding of Anglo-Saxon perceptions of the saint, but have no clear relationship with the Nowell text. Otho B. x contains the only other copy in Old English; it is a fragment of a homiletic narrative, possibly by Ælfric as it is included in a collection largely attributable to him.<sup>33</sup> This was much more badly burned than Vitellius A. xv in the 1731 fire, and only the conclusion

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- 30 Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, pp. xix–xxii. Peter Stokes describes the hands in *English Vernacular Minuscule from Æthelred to Cnut circa 990–circa 1035* (Cambridge, 2014), pp. 152–153. The Blickling Homilies manuscript is Princeton, University Library, Scheide MS 71, online at <<http://puddl.princeton.edu/objects/x346d4176>>, available since 2010; last accessed 16/7/16.
- 31 Rauer, *Old English Martyrology*. A section from one of the Latin texts, corresponding to the extant Nowell version is edited in Rypins, *Prose Texts*, and in Pulsiano, *'Passion of St Christopher'*. Pulsiano discusses the variant manuscripts of the *Acta Sanctorum* and their possible relationship with the Nowell text.
- 32 Edited with a facing page translation by J. Fraser as *'The Passion of St Christopher'*, *Revue Celtique* 34 (1913), 307–325. His edition brings together two manuscript versions: that in Dublin, Royal Irish Academy MS 23 P 16 or 1230 (the Leabhar Breac or 'Speckled Book', compiled c. 1408–11, Duniry); Dublin, Royal Irish Academy MS 23 O 48 a–b ('Liber Flavus Fergusiorum I + II, compiled c. 1437–40). Both are online with detailed introductions at <<http://www.isos.dias.ie/master.html?http://www.isos.dias.ie/libraries/RIA/english/index.html?>>, last accessed 18/5/16.
- 33 Images of the fragments containing parts of the *Life of St. Machutus* with a transcription are online at <<http://www.uky.edu/~kiernan/OBx/X42-57v.html>>, last accessed 18/5/16. It is not unusual to find homilies not by Ælfric included in manuscripts of his work; without more extant text it is not possible to attempt a certain attribution or refutation though the strangeness of the narrative perhaps makes it, like *St Mary of Egypt* which was also in Otho B. x, likely to not be his; cf. Andrew Scheil, 'Bodies and Boundaries in the Old English *Life of St Mary of Egypt*', *Neophilologus* 84 (2000), 137–156, p. 138.

survives.<sup>34</sup> Ker notes, however, that the last few lines are very close to Nowell 95(97) (BL98)r.6–11.<sup>35</sup> This is the final section of the Nowell text, excluding Christopher's final prayer for those who read and write his story which may have been an addition to Nowell. Smith's catalogue of the Cotton manuscripts, completed 35 years before the fire, records *Christopher* as the eleventh item in Otho B. x, with Ælfric's homily on Judith and Holofernes nineteenth; these two narratives may have had relationships elsewhere in the period.<sup>36</sup>

Other roughly contemporary copies of different forms of the Christopher legend abound, in England and on the Continent. The variant versions are numbered by the Bollandists BHL 1764–1780, with 1766–1770 those most closely related to the Anglo-Saxon texts, and there has been some debate about which might be closest to the copy in Nowell.<sup>37</sup> At this stage, it remains clear that the Old English *St Christopher* in the Nowell Codex was translated from a version now represented in one iteration of the *Acta Sanctorum*, and that this translation, with more or fewer adaptations, had fairly wide circulation by the turn of the century. There is, in fact, little evidence for Christopher being well-known in an earlier period and his feast is not noted in Anglo-Saxon liturgical calendars before around 975 where it is usually on 25 July.<sup>38</sup> The bulk of the *Old English Martyrology* was probably translated from a text composed by Acca of

34 See Stuart D. Lee, 'Two Fragments from Cotton MS. Otho B.x', *British Library Journal* 17 (1991), 83–87; Prescott, 'Miserable State'. Linda M. Cantara was able to recover a remarkable amount of text for one text in Otho B. x as she discusses in 'St Mary of Egypt in BL MS Cotton Otho B. x: New Textual Evidence for an Old English Saint's Life' (unpubl. MA dissertation, University of Kentucky, 2001), available online <[http://uknowledge.uky.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1279&context=gradschool\\_theses](http://uknowledge.uky.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1279&context=gradschool_theses)>, last accessed 18/5/16.

35 Equivalent to Pulsiano pp. 178–179, lines 138–142; Fulk pp. 10–13, §42. It is §177 in Ker's *Catalogue*.

36 In C.G.C. Tite, ed., *Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Cottonian Library*, 1696 (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 70–71. Smith's original catalogue was *Catalogus librorum manuscriptorum bibliothecae cottonianae* (Oxford, 1696).

37 Ker, followed by Pulsiano, finds BHL 1769 the closest; James Cross thought BHL 1767 may have been its source, as expressed in personal correspondence with Jane Roberts, to whom I am grateful for discussing this with me; Pam Weisweiler also saw a connection with BHL 1768, 'The Old English *Christopher* Manuscript: Cotton Vitellius A. xv, The Nowell Codex' (unpubl. M.A. dissertation, King's College London, 1985–86). The only printed version (in Pulsiano's and Rypins' editions) is the probably unrelated BHL 1766. Further work on the transmission and variant versions of the Christopher legend is the focus of my current research.

38 The earliest calendar to originally include him is probably Salisbury, Cathedral Library MS 150, fols. 3r–8v, dated 969 x 987. See Rebecca Rushforth, *Saints in English Kalendars Before A.D. 1100*, Henry Bradshaw Society 117 (London, 2008), §6.

Hexham in the 730s.<sup>39</sup> The entry with Christopher, however, only appears in later copies of the text, where he shares his feast day with St Vitalis, another of Decius' martyrs. Both the late appearance and the shared date make it possible that he was a later addition. He was certainly included by the eleventh century, as he appears in London, BL, Cotton MS Julius A. x from about 1000 and Cambridge, CCC MS 196 from later in the century.<sup>40</sup> His name is inscribed with Mary's on the silver ring of a staff headpiece made in England around this time and given to Heribert, archbishop of Cologne from 999 to 1021.<sup>41</sup> It may, then, be the case that Christopher's cult lay relatively dormant in England until the mid- to late tenth century, at which point it became rather more popular. Taken with this general picture, and given that the text shows very few early linguistic features, the Nowell translation is likely to have been made relatively close to its reproduction in this manuscript, perhaps in the mid-tenth century.

*St Christopher* elsewhere appears with other saints' lives, either as part of a larger compilation as in the *Acta Sanctorum* and *Old English Martyrology*, or with some selected lives as seems to have been the case in Otho B. x. In the Nowell Codex it probably originally followed *Judith* and another hagiography; *Judith* may itself have followed other poetic saints' lives.<sup>42</sup> But the Nowell *St Christopher* is followed by the secular catalogue of *Wonders* and the heroic narratives of *Alexander* and *Beowulf*. It is, therefore, of more than incidental interest that one of the Irish versions of the story, in *An Leabhar Breac* (the 'Speckled Book'), also has a set of saints' lives which is followed by a catalogue and then heroic histories of Alexander the Great and his father, Philip of Macedon.<sup>43</sup> Christopher's popularity may, perhaps, have been connected with his

39 As discussed by Rauer, *Old English Martyrology*, pp. 1–4.

40 These are Rauer's MSS B and C respectively; see *Old English Martyrology* pp. 18–25 for full discussion of the manuscripts.

41 Formerly in the treasury at Cologne Cathedral; now at Neu Sankt-Heribert, Köln Deutz-Messe. It is §7, pp. 13–14, in Walter Schulten, ed., *Der Kölner Domschatz mit aufnahmen von Rainer Gaertner* (Köln, 1980) and §93, vol. 2, pp. 326–327 with photographs in Anton Legner, ed., *Ornamenta ecclesiae. Kunst und Künstler der romanik in Köln. Katalog zur Ausstellung des Schütgen-Museums in der Joseph-Haubrich-Kunsthalle*, 3 vols. (Köln, 1985), vol. 2, §E93, pp. 326–327. I am grateful to the priests and staff at Neu Sankt-Heribert for allowing me to view the staff and to Leonie Becks at Köln Domschatzkammer for discussing it with me.

42 Discussed further in Chapter 2. Cf. Ford, *Marvels and Artefact* pp. 56, following John Pickles, 'Studies in the Prose Texts of the 'Beowulf' Manuscript' (unpubl. PhD dissertation, University of Cambridge 1971), p. 9.

43 See footnote 32, above.



monstrous nature and exotic setting; with the bridge that he provides to foreign lands and monster stories.

### *The Wonders of the East*

*Wonders* has a complex history. It is witnessed in three insular and a host of continental manuscripts, between which there are considerable differences, and the range of these suggests that it was at least as well-known as *St Christopher*.<sup>44</sup> In England, along with Nowell's exclusively English version, are Tiberius B. v, a Canterbury manuscript from the early eleventh century, and Bodley 614, perhaps from Battle Abbey around 1160.<sup>45</sup> Bodley is entirely in Latin; Tiberius in Latin followed by Old English section by section. Unlike Nowell, both are laid out in columns with illustrations at the head of each column followed by text, a much clearer and more regular layout which presented fewer challenges to producers. The image schemes in these two manuscripts are clearly related, and both are more refined productions than Nowell. Numerous versions of a similar text across the continent are exclusively in Latin and have a long history, originating in a letter purportedly sent from Pharasamanes, king of Iberia, to either Trajan in the so called 'P Group' texts, or Hadrian, in the 'F Group' versions, so named for the different spellings of the sender ('Premonis' and 'Fermes' respectively). The epistolary frame was lost or discarded relatively early in its transmission, which gives the surviving text a sense of briefly cataloguing or listing the marvels it describes rather than forming any sort of narrative. In her dissertation, Ann Knock gave an authoritative account of the interrelationship of the insular versions and of the various continental witnesses, as well as derivative texts such as the *Liber monstrorum*; she gave an updated overview of the complex picture in McGurk's facsimile of Tiberius.<sup>46</sup>

44 See also Elżbieta Temple, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts 900–1066*, A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles Volume 2 (London, 1976), p. 22.

45 For dates and places of production, see most recently Ford, *Marvel and Artefact*, summarised p. 2; with more detail pp. 62–65 on Tiberius and pp. 111–112 on Bodley.

46 'Wonders of the East': A Synoptic Edition of 'The Letter of Pharasamanes' and the Old English and Old Picard Translations (unpubl. University of London PhD dissertation, 1981); McGurk *et al.*, *Illustrated Miscellany*. A précis, particularly focused on the translation process, is given by Knock in 'Analysis of a Translator: The Old English *Wonders of the East*', *Alfred the Wise: Studies in Honour of Janet Bately on the Occasion of her Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, eds. Jane Roberts and Janet L. Nelson with Malcolm Godden (Cambridge, 1997), 121–126. Detailed commentary on the textual relationship between the Anglo-Saxon versions is in her *Synoptic Edition*, pp. 21–146, and the fullest published account is by Knock

The Old English texts found in Nowell and Tiberius are very similar, although Tiberius often contains more detail, in addition to four additional wonders at the end and a concluding account of the apocryphal story of Jamnes and Mambres.<sup>47</sup> One conclusion might be that Tiberius represents an earlier version, but the readings in Nowell seem on the whole to show more dialectical and archaic linguistic features, and are probably closer to the source text in a number of places, though it is also more prone to errors and has clearly been subject to some alteration.<sup>48</sup> Knock, for instance, observes the presence in Nowell of the vocalic adverb *a* (“ever”) before *æthrineð* in two places.<sup>49</sup> By comparison with other versions, she demonstrates that there is no reason for the insertion other than stylistic choice. As the Old English versions have a common ancestor and the Tiberius version does not include this adverb in either position, the word must have been added at some point during its time in England, either by Scribe A or an ancestor not shared with the Tiberius text.<sup>50</sup> Tiberius’ English does not closely translate its Latin, so it seems that *Wonders* was transmitted as two texts, altered or corrupted separately. Bodley contains no Old English, but is practically identical to Tiberius’ Latin text. Their layout and illustrations are also extremely similar in design and execution and the manuscripts are clearly related.<sup>51</sup> The English versions (both Latin and Old English) of the text are known collectively as ‘The Marvels of the East’ or *Mirabilia* versions, and form a distinct stemma of the P-version of the text.<sup>52</sup>

Tiberius gives a fuller account of several of the sections it shares with Nowell, which misses out a number of details such as the dark colour of the *Hostes*

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and McGurk in the ‘Marvels of the East’ section of the ‘Introduction’ to McGurk *et al.*, *Illustrated Miscellany*, pp. 88–95. These update Sisam’s more straightforward but now outdated textual history in ‘Compilation’, pp. 74–80.

- 47 Fulk and Orchard include these additional sections in their editions of *Wonders*. I consider some exclusions from the Nowell version in Chapter 4 below.
- 48 Paul Gibb, *Wonders of the East: A Critical Edition* (unpubl. Duke University PhD dissertation, 1977); cf. Knock, *Synoptic Edition*, pp. 92–97.
- 49 On 96(98) (BL99)v.17, in §6 and, as an *o*, on 96(98) (BL99)r.11–12, in §3. The second of these is not noted by Orchard or Fulk in their textual notes.
- 50 She notes this “puzzling feature”, *Synoptic Edition*, p. 134. See Knock’s detailed discussion of the textual relationships *Synoptic Edition*, pp. 70–146, with a particular focus on the relationship between the two Old English versions, pp. 100–110. A detailed analysis of the translator of the source text for both is pp. 118–134.
- 51 Ford, *Marvel and Artefact*, pp. 111–112.
- 52 See *Illustrated Miscellany*, p. 89 and John Block Friedman, ‘The Marvels-of-the-East Tradition in Anglo-Saxon Art’, *Sources of Anglo-Saxon Culture*, ed. Paul Szarmach, *Studies in Medieval Culture* 20 (Kalamazoo, 1986), 319–341, at p. 319.

in §14 and the description of *Hallescentia*, the location of the two-headed serpents, in §5.<sup>53</sup> Like other readers, I have not been able to discern any policy in the details present in Tiberius and absent from Nowell, although there are sometimes localised reasons for detail to be excluded in Nowell. The Nowell *Wonders* (or a recent antecedent) was almost certainly copied from a dual-language text similar to that in Tiberius. The copyist identified Old English sections requiring copying by using the illustrations as sectional markers, and this led him to miss out the unillustrated section which describes *Hallescentia*.<sup>54</sup> However, no clear relationship can be identified between the two manuscripts and the different illustrative schemes suggest that they developed separately at an early date, perhaps even when an ur-text arrived in England. It is likely that the Nowell version drew on different exemplars or brought in some new ideas to produce a wholly exceptional version of a text that, like *St Christopher*, was widespread in subtly different forms. The Nowell *Wonders*, both images and text, has often been seen as debased and weak next to the near-contemporary witnesses, but Mittman and Kim argue for its value as an intriguing and disturbing text.<sup>55</sup>

An earlier form of the text may, like *Alexander*, have given a stronger sense of a journey being undertaken through eastern lands and interactions with the peoples and beasts there encountered.<sup>56</sup> As it now stands in Nowell it contains thirty-two sections with various beings and communities, ranging from the relatively mild and certainly bestial (such as the sheep of *Antimolima* in the first section), to the disturbing, inimical part-men (such as the *Donestre* and *Hostes*), some examples of generous and fully human peoples, and three types of plant. Each section, including what type of being it offers and how dangerous it appears to be, is shown in tabular form in Appendix 1. As demonstrated there, many are only remarkable because they fail to show the hostility one might expect in foreign parts, or because their generosity is itself excessive:

53 Explored in more detail in Chapter 4 below; it seems likely that some of the details, such as the colour of the *Hostes*, were available in an earlier version of the Nowell copy text as they are shown in its illustrations. I follow Orchard's section numbers, given in Appendix 1.

54 Knock, *Synoptic Edition*, p. 104; McGurk et al., *Illustrated Miscellany*, p. 94.

55 Mittman and Kim, *Inconceivable Beasts*, throughout but e.g. pp. 6–9. See also Thomson, 'The Two Artists of the Nowell Codex *Wonders of the East*', *SELIM: Journal of the Spanish Society for Medieval English Language and Literature* 21 (2015–16). I argue in the same direction in Chapters 3 and 4 below.

56 Cf. Andrea Rossi-Reder, 'Wonders of the Beast: India in Classical and Medieval Literature', *Marvels, Monsters, and Miracles*, eds. Jones and Sprunger (2002), 53–66, esp. pp. 54–56. She discusses some sources for the Nowell *Wonders*, pp. 63–66.

most extremely, a society is described in §30 which gives each visitor a woman to carry away with him. It seems likely that the earliest form had wealth, not women, as the gift given freely; *muneribus* was misread as *mulieribus* at some stage in transmission and the error is firmly established in the English versions. That the illustrations in all three insular manuscripts show a woman being carried away suggests that the images may be a relatively late, perhaps even insular, addition to the text.<sup>57</sup>

Various suggestions have been made for the progress of *Wonders*, and different world-views or organising principles have been read into it. However, if there is any design, it is neither comprehensive nor convincing. Perhaps because the major edition is in a volume analysing the monstrous, *Wonders* is usually described and treated critically as a 'book of monsters', but this is an unsafe generalisation, given that at least eleven of its wonders are not conventionally 'monstrous'. It has also been proposed as a 'chain of being', moving from bestial to human, with the territory in between being the most wondrous and disturbing. As a survey of creation, this fits especially well with the scientific texts that surround *Wonders* in Tiberius.<sup>58</sup> But steady progress towards the human is persistently interrupted by animals, plants, and finally undermined by the last two wonders. Tiberius may have been adapted to attempt to bring the text to a more rousing climax with a focus on divine control through the lengthy addition of the apocryphal legend of 'Jamnes and Mambres' about the two sorcerers who challenge Moses and Aaron in Exodus 7. On the other hand, the four additional wonders within Tiberius which precede 'Jamnes and Mambres' in no sense build towards it, but rather meander, with tales of two more beasts, two lands, and one group of black humans. The original rationale for the structure was geographical: the wonders are roughly grouped by location, and are often given in relation to "Babilonia burh" ("the city Babylon") or other significant landmarks such as "þære Readan Sæ" ("the Red Sea"). A rationale of this kind may be expected if a distant ancestor of this text did claim to be

57 Cf. Donald Scragg who suggests that the text now ought not to be read without its images. 'Secular Prose', *A Companion to Anglo-Saxon Literature*, eds. Phillip Pulsiano and Elaine Treharne (Oxford, 2008), 268–280 at p. 272.

58 Mary Olson, *Fair and Varied Forms: Visual Textuality in Medieval Illuminated Manuscripts*, Studies in Medieval History and Culture 15 (London, 2003), p. 134; Knock, 'Analysis of a Translator', p. 124. Knock also observes that the text is always found in pseudo-scientific collections with the exceptions of Nowell and Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale MS 14561–64, where an Old French version is found with an Alexander text and a history of the kings of France, *Synoptic Edition*, p. 51. Ford notes that Nowell is unusual among insular versions in the "lack of an explicit Christian interpretative frame", *Marvels and Artefact* p. 57.

the record of a journey. *Wonders* in Tiberius is complemented by a map on fol. 57r, which shows many of the locations identified within the text;<sup>59</sup> like all of the texts in Nowell, *Wonders* gives an account of journeying into hostile territory. The scheme is, though, inconsistent and frequently interrupted; even when they are given, distances are entirely irrelevant and internally inconsistent.<sup>60</sup> The loss of the epistolary opening and closing frame to the *Mirabilia* versions means that the text travels from nowhere to nowhere.

As in the Exeter Anthology, where in local contexts the organising principle often seems clear, small groups often complement one another well.<sup>61</sup> The same principle has been seen in the Exeter Riddles, and indeed in earlier collections of *enigmata*.<sup>62</sup> Here, it is most evident in the different sheep in §1 and §2; or the types of woman who form §27 and §28, who also anticipate the women given away as part of §30. Certain features or ideas also repeat themselves, such as strange looking part-humans who run away from visitors in §13 and §18; or recurring trees producing precious things in §20, §25, and §31. As Orchard notes, the expanded versions in Tiberius and Bodley – the latter including ten items lifted from Isidore's *Etymologiae* – suggests that compilers or scribes had a relatively relaxed attitude to the text and may have adjusted it according to their interests and knowledge.<sup>63</sup> In this context it is plausible that scribes inserted extraordinary beings that share features of particular interest: indeed, it is reasonable to suppose that wonders such as §12 and §13

59 A number of images of the map are readily available. The most accessible is the BL's, <<http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/unvbrit/a/001cottibb00005u00056v00.html>>, but only McGurk's facsimile provides an image clear enough to identify more than the most obvious of the place names. Mittman and Kim, *Inconceivable Beasts*, attempt to map the text onto this map in Color Plate 8 (to which their text refers as Figure 7.1) and discuss their results pp. 183–185. Cf. Knock's map, which attempts to match the text, its direction of travel, and the locations mentioned onto a modern projection of the Middle East, *Synoptic Edition*, p. 47.

60 Mittman and Kim compare distances and the varying ratios of *stadia* to leagues that the text gives, Appendix A, p. 239. Ratios range from around 1.5 : 1 up to 3.27 : 1. Their attempt to argue for some meaning out of this as a “sense of collapsing distances” is not convincing, *Inconceivable Beasts*, at p. 156.

61 On its organisation, see Muir, *Exeter Anthology*, pp. 16–25, esp. pp. 22–25.

62 Mercedes Salvador-Bello, ‘Patterns of Compilation in Anglo-Latin *Enigmata* and the Evidence of a Source-Collection in Riddles 1–40 of the Exeter Book’, *Viator* 1 (2012), 339–374; T.J. Leary, *Symphosius. The Aenigmata: An Introduction, Text and Commentary* (London, 2014), pp. 13–26, esp. p. 15. I am grateful to Andy Orchard for bringing these arguments to my attention.

63 *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 18–27, esp. pp. 20–21.

(both particoloured part-humans) are different versions of the same creature, with the second brought in at some stage in the belief that it was a related, rather than practically identical, wonder.<sup>64</sup> What should be clear from both this discussion and the overview provided by Appendix 1 is that there is neither consistent movement nor any overarching ‘story’ to the text. While common themes recur, and some sections show progression from one another, the text as a whole does not aspire to any particular integrity.<sup>65</sup>

*Wonders* is no more simply monstrous than *St Christopher*. Monstrous and violent sections have dominated recent critical discussion, but the text itself is dominated by the strange rather than the frightening and more attention could perhaps be paid to the noble, good, and valuable wonders and peoples that it describes. As a potential travelogue, it resembles *Alexander*, whose titular figure appears within it three times. And some details of individual creatures engage with *St Christopher* and *Beowulf*. The powerful and thereby threatening women recall Judith and Grendel’s Mother, as well as the prostitutes who cause chaos for Dagnus in the full version of *Saint Christopher*. More broadly, the text’s engagement with the idea of other worlds and the traumas caused by interactions between them has clear implications for the reading of *Beowulf*, and indeed of *Judith*.<sup>66</sup>

64 Although note Olson’s argument that artistry and meaning is based on “[r]epetition, movement, and counter-movement”, *Fair and Varied Forms*, p. 24.

65 Contrast Greta Austin, ‘Marvelous Peoples or Marvelous Races? Race and the Anglo-Saxon *Wonders of the East*’, *Marvels, Monsters, and Miracles*, eds. Jones and Sprunger (2002), 27–51, at pp. 28–33. Her argument is undermined somewhat by the five “interruptions” that have to be admitted at n. 22 p. 33, and her reliance on marvels not in Nowell for hierarchy as an organising principle, pp. 44–45. Knock dismisses an exegetical interpretation given that a text surviving in so many versions would show some indication of such application. She suggests that there may not even have been any grand purpose behind the original *Letter*, comparing it with freak shows and sci-fi comics, *Synoptic Edition*, pp. 42–44 and p. 39 respectively; cf. Ford, *Marvels and Artefact* pp. 58–59.

66 Catherine Karkov (delivered on her behalf by Elaine Treharne), ‘Utopian Monsters: *Beowulf*, e-*Beowulf*, and the *Wonders of the East*’ at the 49th International Medieval Congress, Kalamazoo, 2014; cf. Courtney Catherine Barajas, ‘Reframing the Monstrous: Visions of Desire and a Unified Christendom in the Anglo-Saxon *Wonders of the East*’, *East Meets West in the Middle Ages and Early Modern times: Transcultural Experiences in the Premodern World*, ed. Albrecht Classen, Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture 14 (Berlin, 2013), 243–261; Dana M. Oswald, ‘The Indecent Bodies of the *Wonders of the East*’, *Monsters, Gender, and Sexuality in Medieval English Literature*, ed. Dana M. Oswald, Gender in the Middle Ages 5 (Cambridge, 2010), 27–65.

### *The Letter of Alexander to Aristotle*

Alexander the Great appears in many forms across the medieval period.<sup>67</sup> His representation in the Nowell text has been authoritatively discussed by Orchard and I follow his analysis here.<sup>68</sup> The story of Alexander circulated widely in various forms from his death in 323 BCE onwards. The most well-known and widely spread became the 'Alexander Romance', based at least partly on a Greek version of a letter purportedly written by Alexander during his travels to his family and to his teacher Aristotle. The Greek letter is no longer extant but a Latin translation, the *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem*, was made in the seventh century or earlier.<sup>69</sup> The Old English *Alexander* translates the *Epistola* but other accounts of Alexander also circulated in Anglo-Saxon England. He is mentioned twice in *Wonders* as the kind of human who interacts with the strange peoples encountered in that text, and he is much more significant in the same role in the *Liber monstrorum de diversis generibus* ("Book of monsters of various kinds"). Five extant manuscripts attest to its popularity in the period.<sup>70</sup> The *Liber monstrorum* has been dated to c. 650 x c. 750 by Michael Lapidge, who shows that it was, in fact, composed in England or Ireland, and that the *Epistola* was a key source.<sup>71</sup> The late eleventh-century London, BL, Royal MS 13 A. i brings a whole range of Alexander texts together, including the *Epistola*.<sup>72</sup> Clearly, knowledge of and interest in Alexander the Great and his exploits flowed throughout the Anglo-Saxon period. The manuscript relationships noted

67 For a general introduction, see G.H.W. Bunt, *Alexander the Great in the Literature of Medieval Britain* (Groningen, 1994); Hildegard Tristram, 'Der Insulare Alexander', *Kontinuität und Transformation der Antike im Mittelalter*, ed. W. Erzgräber (Sigmaringen, 1989), 129–155 and 'More Talk of Alexander', *Celtica* 21 (1990), 658–663.

68 *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 116–139; *Companion*, pp. 25–39.

69 See Lloyd Gunderson, *Alexander's Letter to Aristotle about India*, *Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie* 110 (Meisenham am Glan, 1980) on the evolution of *Alexander* from the Greek text and for a reconstructed full text.

70 These are Wolfenbüttel, Herzog-August Bibliothek, Gudianus lat. MS 148, fols. 108v–123v; St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek MS 237, pp. 2–6; Leiden, Bibliothek der Rijks-Universiteit, Voss. lat. MS Oct. 60, fols. 1v–12v; New York, Morgan Library and Museum MS M.906, pp. 79–110; London, BL, Royal MS 15 B. xix, fols. 103v–105v. See Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, with an edition and translation as Appendix IIb pp. 254–317 and discussion pp. 86–115, with an overview of origins pp. 86–87.

71 Michael Lapidge, 'Beowulf, Aldhelm, the *Liber Monstrorum* and Wessex', *Anglo-Latin Literature, 600–899*, ed. Michael Lapidge (London, 1996), 271–338, who lists the manuscripts p. 283 and discusses sources and production in detail. Cf. Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 86, 93 & 125–126.

72 Discussed by Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 120 & 126–129.

above between an Old French version of *Wonders* and an Alexander text in Brussels 14561–64, and *Christopher's* similar relationship in *An Leabhar Breac*, perhaps suggest that *Alexander* was the magnet drawing the Nowell texts together (though I will propose this role for *Wonders* in Chapter 2). There is certainly every reason to assume that he was more familiar to the compilers and readers of the Nowell Codex than was *Beowulf*.

Given all of these strands and traditions, the story related in *Alexander* is condensed. After an epistolary opening addressing his mother, sisters, and tutor Aristotle, Alexander notes that he has recently overcome both Darius of the Persians and Porus, the wealthy king he encounters in India. Porus' opulent palace is described in detail, before Alexander and his army travel to track him down. The bulk of the letter focuses on the animals and landscape of India and the wealth of its communities, finding most of them hostile. In particular, a lengthy section focuses on hardships encountered in crossing the desert. After a sequence of dramatic adventures, several of which are followed by Alexander brutally punishing local guides for leading him into danger, the army catches up with Porus. Alexander, disguised, goes to speak with his rival. The next morning, Porus submits without a fight, becoming a friend and ally. Another travel sequence ensues, including more encounters with strange animals, tribes, and the environment. Finally, two old men meet Alexander on the road, and direct him to the sacred grove of the Trees of the Sun and the Moon. This paradisaal garden is tended by an aged priest. Under the priest's direction, the trees prophesy three times to Alexander, telling him that he will never come home to his mother and sisters (to whom the letter is addressed), each occasion providing a little more information about his doom until the narrator is left bereft and alone, waiting for death. The Old English version ends after the third prophecy.

The *Epistola* continues Alexander's story after leaving the grove in a broadly repetitive narration of travel and battle. The translator, then, seems to have been focused on tightening the narrative and was perhaps engaged with the haunting loneliness of its final scene, comparable with *Beowulf* which closes as its hero's body burns and in pleasing contrast with the jubilation at the end of *Judith*.<sup>73</sup> *Alexander* is a carefully produced piece of work, though estimates of its quality have tended towards the dismissive, in no small part because it freely adapts its source. Another frequent criticism has been of its heavy use of

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73 Cf. Susan M. Kim, "'If One Who Is Loved Is Not Present, A Letter May Be Embraced Instead': Death and the *Letter of Alexander to Aristotle*", *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 109 (2010), 33–51, who notes the exclusion of a number of monstrous beings that results from the abbreviation of the text.



word pairs: Orchard finds almost two hundred.<sup>74</sup> Both traits have been read as a lack of skill, but this judgment seems a little unfair. Orchard discusses the translator's strategies in detail, identifying a tendency towards elaborate – almost poetic – diction, and an intense focus on the character of Alexander who becomes more arrogant than in the *Epistola*.<sup>75</sup> This is similar to the trend he finds in the Old English translation of Orosius' account of Alexander, which renders the king as bloodthirsty and brutal.<sup>76</sup> That is, both Old English retellings of Alexander's story treat the source with some freedom and with an agenda. The Nowell *Alexander* may be stylistically over-worked, but it is neither thoughtless nor unskilful.

Significantly, Orchard has found that there are strong similarities at several points between the language used in *Alexander* and that in *Beowulf*.<sup>77</sup> In particular, there is a common clustering of forms of the verb *sceawian* and the element *wundor* and a number of details of language and description that they share when Alexander or Beowulf encounter monsters or monstrous places. One telling instance is the noun *nicor* used four times in *Alexander*, five times in *Beowulf*, three times in Blickling Homily XVI, and nowhere else in Old English. Orchard suggests that the "tissue of echoes and parallels, both verbal and thematic" linking the two texts strongly suggests that *Beowulf* was known to the translator of *Alexander* and that the poem was used to assist in the translation process.<sup>78</sup> Probably, then, the two texts had been together in at least one manuscript before they were copied into the Nowell Codex, an issue to which we shall return in Chapter 2.

The translation is datable to the late ninth or early tenth century, and so is independent of the wave of interest in the exotic that produced the *Liber monstrorum*.<sup>79</sup> As Orchard argues, it is clear that *Alexander* can be seen as "a fine companion-piece" to the poem, and it was almost certainly regarded as such when included in the Nowell Codex, and perhaps for several generations beforehand.<sup>80</sup> Its sense of movement, and the use it makes of an arrogant first-person narrator unaware of his destiny and what a fool he can look, makes for engaging readings alongside the absurd Dagnus in *Christopher* and Holofernes

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74 *Pride and Prodigies*, p. 132.

75 *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 132–139.

76 *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 120–125.

77 *Companion*, pp. 23–35.

78 *Companion*, p. 35.

79 It has been connected with the Alfredian translation programme, most recently by Khalaf who follows Sisam, in 'Service of Exemplarity', esp. pp. 666–667.

80 *Companion*, p. 36; see also p. 39.

in *Judith*; the text's interest in travelling and encounters which prove to be both intimidating and productive works well with *Beowulf* and *Wonders*.<sup>81</sup>

### *Beowulf*

The story of *Beowulf* is unknown outside the Nowell Codex; its titular hero is similarly obscure, though the name does appear (as *Biuuulf*) in Durham's *Liber Vitae*, possibly as a part of an intentional reference to the text though more likely in reference to a monk, perhaps living at Monkwearmouth-Jarrow around 700.<sup>82</sup> Either way, Neidorf has demonstrated from onomastic evidence that the name is unlikely to have been created and used independently of the tradition represented in the poem. There is a vast body of study on the origins of *Beowulf* and his story, and I seek only to summarise some broad points of critical consensus here. Beyond the Northumbrian monk, there is no other clear English evidence of such a legend, and it is possible that *Beowulf* was at best a minor figure in the northern world whose narrative was, for some reason, embellished in early Anglo-Saxon England.<sup>83</sup> There are, however, a significant number of parallel narratives, particularly in Old Norse, which are most fully played out in *Hrólfs saga kraka* where the *Beowulf* role is taken by Bǫðvarr Bjarki.<sup>84</sup> The saga is relatively late, dating from around 1400 in its current form and based on a version from the early thirteenth century. The Danish, Geatish, and Swedish histories touched on in the poem were certainly all known to

81 It is based on my reading of Alexander, Dagnus, and Holofernes as unsympathetic and ridiculous that I disagree with McFadden's reading, focused on *Alexander* but engaged with the whole codex, of empathy for a native king assaulted by forces he does not understand, which leads him to place the manuscript's production in Æthelred's reign, 'Social Context', esp. p. 114. On the first-person narrator see also note 200 below.

82 The most recent edition is David Rollason and Lynda Rollason, eds. *Durham Liber Vitae: London, British Library, MS Cotton Domitian A.VII: Edition and Digital Facsimile with Introduction, Codicological, Prosopographical and Linguistic Commentary, and Indexes including the 'Biographical Register of Durham Cathedral Priory (1083–1539)' by A.J. Piper*, 3 vols. (London, 2007). *Biuuulf* appears in the original core of the text, which can be dated to approximately 700. See Leonard Neidorf, 'Beowulf Before *Beowulf*: Anglo-Saxon Anthroponymy and Heroic Legend', *RES* n.s. 64 (2012), 553–573, esp. pp. 558–559 and references.

83 Neidorf, 'Beowulf Before *Beowulf*', pp. 565–568.

84 The various comparable texts are most comprehensively presented in G.N. Garmonsway and Jacqueline Simpson, trans. and eds., '*Beowulf*' and its Analogues (London, 1968); also summarised or reprised in Fulk *et al.*, *Klaeber's 'Beowulf'*, Parallels, pp. 291–315; see North, *Origins of 'Beowulf'* for a comprehensive discussion of the connections, esp. Chapter 7: 'The King's Soul: Danish Mythology in *Beowulf*', pp. 194–224.

various extents in Anglo-Saxon England, and the more knowledge we gain, the more accurate the poet's knowledge of this history seems to be.<sup>85</sup> The arrival of Scyld Scefing which opens the poem was important in the founding genealogies of the Wessex kings recorded in the late ninth century.<sup>86</sup> Parts of the myth are clearly echoed in a ritual recorded at Abingdon in the thirteenth century as having occurred in the tenth, and *scyld* or *sceld* occurs in place-names in charters from 955 at Wilton, 1042 in Farnborough, and 1062 at Waltham Abbey.<sup>87</sup> The obscure name *Grendel* occurs in at least seven place-names across a wide part of the country including Worcestershire, Devon, Wiltshire, Surrey, and Middlesex.<sup>88</sup> Beowulf's uncle Hygelac appears as a giant in the *Liber monstrorum*.<sup>89</sup> And *Heruteu* is used as the Latin name for Hartlepool by Bede.<sup>90</sup> It seems likely, then, that various fragments of what we know as the *Beowulf* narrative circulated in England from an early period, with its inclusion in this manuscript suggesting that the story still resonated into the eleventh century.<sup>91</sup> There may, of course, have been various different versions of this narrative, each with its own digressions, allusions, and legendary names, and this poetic rendering is simply the only surviving witness to a rich tradition.<sup>92</sup>

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- 85 Tom Shippey, 'Names in *Beowulf* and Anglo-Saxon England', *Reassessment*, ed. Neidorf (2014), 58–78, esp. p. 72; cf. the similar position taken on the poet's knowledge by Frederick Biggs in 'History and Fiction in the Frisian Raid', *Reassessment*, ed. Neidorf (2014), 138–156, esp. p. 156.
- 86 Though for the most recent argument that there is no connection between genealogy and poem, see Dennis Cronan, 'Beowulf and the Containment of Scyld in the West Saxon Royal Genealogy', *Reassessment*, ed. Neidorf (2014), 112–137.
- 87 S 582, S 993, and S 1036 respectively. Joseph Stevenson was the first to note these appearances in his *Chronicon monasterii de Abingdon: volume 2* (London, 1858), p. xl. The Abingdon ritual is widely discussed: see *inter alia* John Hudson, *Historia ecclesie abbendonensis: The History of the Church of Abingdon* (Oxford, 2007), p. clxiv. North, followed by Anlezark, regards the thirteenth-century record as probably authentic based on the archaic spelling *Gifteleia* for Iffley. North, *Heathen Gods in Old English Literature* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 189–191; Daniel Anlezark, *Water and Fire: The Myth of the Flood in Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester, 2006), p. 270.
- 88 S 78, S 255, S 416 (which also includes a "Beowan hammes hecgan"), S 645, S 579, S 786, S 1451. I am following Fulk *et al.*, *Klaeber's 'Beowulf'* here, as listed pp. 293–294.
- 89 See Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 106–107 & 109–110.
- 90 Joseph Harris, 'A Note on the Other Heorot', *Reassessment*, ed. Neidorf (2014), 178–190.
- 91 Though see Neidorf, 'Germanic Legend'; the tradition may have died out from the late ninth century.
- 92 For some contrasting views, see Bredehoft, *Visible Text*, who argues that the Nowell *Beowulf* may have always been intended to be a unique copy and that its making may have been accompanied by the destruction of other copies, pp. 23 & 27–29; Damico, 'Beowulf'

Based on extant manuscript evidence alone, however, *Beowulf* – the longest text and most celebrated today – would have been by some distance the least well-known of the figures included in this compilation.

Metrical and linguistic analyses fairly conclusively demonstrate that the text was settled in the eighth or ninth century, aligning with literary-historical arguments that place it in, or a generation after, Offa's reign in Mercia.<sup>93</sup> Parts, of course, could have been developed in later years or assumed a settled form at an earlier stage with later interpolations. Kiernan hypothesises that there were at least two different *Beowulf* narratives in the early eleventh century, corresponding to the sections in Denmark and Geatland, and that they were first combined in the Nowell Codex with a bridging passage written or adapted by Scribe B. This theory has not been widely endorsed, and does not seem likely owing to its inherent indifference to the text as a single, coherent work.<sup>94</sup> A more extreme reading sees the Danish section as a political allegory written about Cnut's reign at some point in the 1030s.<sup>95</sup> The likelihood remains that the substantive text of *Beowulf* was probably about three hundred years old by the early eleventh century and was not fully comprehended by its final scribes. It does, however, remain important to acknowledge that it was relevant, presumably with rather different resonances and meanings from those it had for an original audience, to at least one community in the eleventh century.<sup>96</sup>

Almost equally vexed is the question of how old the exemplar (or exemplars) was. It seems almost certain that *Beowulf* was read during the translation of *Alexander* in the late ninth or early tenth century. Sisam demonstrates on linguistic grounds that they were probably copied together in the mid-tenth century. Thus, the exemplar for these texts would be perhaps fifty years old by the time the Nowell Codex was made; if so, it was probably written in Square

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and the *Grendelkin*, who argues that the first two-thirds of *Beowulf* were composed in an allegorical response to the political events of 1035.

93 For a range of views, see the essays in Chase, *Dating*; the period considered is more narrow in Neidorf's more recent *Reassessment*, which is broadly framed to endorse Robert Fulk's dating by metrical criteria, most fully presented in *A History of Old English Meter* (Philadelphia, 1992), e.g. p. 31; the most comprehensive literary-historical argument for dating is in North, *Origins*.

94 George Clark remains open to the idea that what he calls *Beowulf* 1 and 11 could have been separate poems, though he finds "[u]nity is[...]more probable than disunity", in 'Scandals in Toronto: Kaluza's Law and transliteration errors', *Reassessment*, ed. Neidorf (2014), 219–234, p. 227.

95 Damico, *'Beowulf' and the Grendelkin*, who finds the "historical parallels[...]too compelling to dismiss" pp. 6–7.

96 Bredehoft, 'Metrical Evolution', p. 98.

minuscule. An opposing view, ignoring both the connection with *Alexander*, the probable mid-tenth-century reproduction, and the dates of the other texts in the manuscript, has been proposed by Michael Lapidge, and broadly followed.<sup>97</sup> Lapidge argues that the scribes found their exemplar difficult to read, and that they were particularly prone to errors with some key letters. On this basis, he suggested that the script they were copying from must have been unfamiliar, where letters such as *a*, *n*, *p* [wynn], *c* and *d* could be readily misread. He identified the exemplar as from the eighth century: more or less the period when *Beowulf* was probably first composed. The hypothesis is attractive in its elegance and because it appears to give us a closer connection to an original text, although Eric Stanley gave a detailed analysis of its palaeographical flaws, questioning the significance of Lapidge's statistics in comparison with other Old English texts and interrogating the likelihood of single letter confusions arising from the difficulty of reading those letters rather than other and varied sources.<sup>98</sup> There have since been some scholarly exchanges on the merits of Lapidge's argument. Roberta Frank follows Stanley in a general undermining of critical certainties on the dating of *Beowulf*,<sup>99</sup> but they have both been partially refuted by George Clark, who argues that Stanley's mini-case study of the Arundel Psalter does not undermine Lapidge's case, though he does not address Stanley's and Frank's more fundamental concerns.<sup>100</sup> As I have shown elsewhere, there is no correlation between the mistakes that Lapidge identifies as potentially caused by an exemplar that was difficult to read and those that the scribes themselves correct.<sup>101</sup> That is, given that the scribes make a large number of corrections, often altering single letters, Lapidge's argument should expect them to make a proportionately larger number of changes to the specific letters that they supposedly struggled to read. They do not. Unless we start to make assumptions, such as that the self-correcting scribes did not realise that they were struggling to read particular letters, this lack of correlation strongly suggests that the Nowell Codex scribes did not work from a challenging eighth-century exemplar of *Beowulf*. It should be noted that, unlike many of his followers, Lapidge does not assume that the errors originated

97 Lapidge, 'The Archetype of *Beowulf*', *ASE* 29 (2000), 5–41. See below, esp. note 104, for his followers.

98 Eric Stanley, 'Paleographical and Textual Deep Waters: <a> for <u> and <u> for <a>, <d> for <ð> and <ð> for <d> in Old English', *ANQ* 15 (2002), 64–72.

99 'A Scandal in Toronto: *The Dating of 'Beowulf'* a Quarter Century On', *Speculum* 82 (2007), 843–864, see esp. p. 857.

100 'The Date of *Beowulf* and the Arundel Psalter Gloss', *Modern Philology* 106 (2009), 677–685.

101 Discussed in detail in Thomson, 'Scribes, Sources, and Readers', pp. 65–68. A full list of the corrections I see the scribes making is in Appendix 3.

in the Nowell text, proposing at least one late ninth- or early tenth-century reproduction in-between.<sup>102</sup> Lapidge does, though, propose that *Wonders* and *Alexander* could have been in that ancient exemplar; there is no evidence that makes either text so old.<sup>103</sup> This debate is important, but seems to have been largely ignored, with Lapidge's argument widely accepted and increasingly applied to other texts.<sup>104</sup> The broad applicability of the theory to any text significantly undermines it: scribes often make mistakes with some or all of these individual letters, and it is not likely that every literary text in Anglo-Saxon England had an eighth-century exemplar.

Although Neidorf follows Lapidge's unconvincing proposition of a very old exemplar, his wider discussion of scribal errors is more useful. Engaging with Sisam's note that the unreliable nature of scribal copying can be clearly seen in the errors they make with names, he analyses the pattern and significance of scribal errors with proper names in *Beowulf* to reinforce the idea of an exemplar which the scribes did not fully understand.<sup>105</sup> That is, he proposes scribes recording a text which they found confusing and which they often failed to render accurately. A widely discussed instance is Scribe B's *mere pio ingasmilts* on 193 (BL197)r.10, which he corrected from *mere pio inganmilts*. This is usually rendered *Merewioingas milts* ("the Merovingian's mercy") at line 2921.<sup>106</sup> That the scribe corrected his writing shows that he was worried about getting it right; that he spaced the words out into units, and produced a meaningless phrase, suggests that he did not understand what he had read in the exemplar but that he was determined to represent it as accurately as possible.<sup>107</sup> This is

102 'Archetype', p. 36. This intermediate stage has not been noted by most subsequent scholars; see e.g. Neidorf, 'Germanic Legend', pp. 38–39.

103 'Archetype', pp. 40–41.

104 This is evident not only in Neidorf's work and edited volume, but also in A.N. Doane, ed., *Genesis A: A New Edition, Revised*, MRTS 435 (Tempe, AZ, 2013), and in many papers at the International Medieval Conferences at Kalamazoo in 2014 and 2015. George Clark's recent review of Lapidge's argument finds it less convincing than Fulk's metrical evidence (see note 93 above), but he is still content to assert that "the archetype of *Beowulf* was written before 750", 'Scandals in Toronto', p. 234.

105 Sisam's note is in 'The Authority of Old English Poetical Manuscripts', *Studies*, ed. Sisam (1953), 29–44, at p. 37; first printed in *RES* 22 (1946), 257–268. For the challenges encountered by the scribes in working on *Beowulf*, see also Orchard, *Companion*, esp. pp. 49–54.

106 Noted and discussed Neidorf, 'Scribal Errors of Proper Names', p. 255; see also Fig. 5.5.

107 Tom Shippey, 'The Merov(ich)ingian Again: *damnatio memoriae* and the *usus scholarum*', *Latin Learning and English Lore: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature for Michael Lapidge Volume 1*, eds. Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe and Andy Orchard (Toronto, 2005), 389–406, esp. pp. 399–401 on the unique preservation of this form here, and p. 402 on Scribe B's efforts to record it; cf. Johan Gerritsen, "'Have With You to Lexington!': The *Beowulf* Manuscript

not a question of incomprehensible letter-forms: modern editors agree with the letters written by Scribe B, just not with the way he resolved them into units of meaning. This seems certain to be a scribe who was so unfamiliar with the Merovingians that even working at his text did not elucidate it for him. The majority of errors Neidorf identifies are in names like this, connected with heroic histories to which the text makes no more than passing allusion.<sup>108</sup> That is, it is not the letters themselves that the scribes found hard, nor is it the monster fights and activities of the eponymous hero. It seems that the Nowell Codex (or its exemplars) was copied at a time when the Migration Age tribes and their leaders were no longer widely known. Neidorf, indeed, makes a strong argument that heroic history of the sort represented in *Beowulf* was no longer of interest in the late Anglo-Saxon period.<sup>109</sup> However, it is important to note – which he does not – that late Anglo-Saxon scribal errors with names are hardly exclusive to heroic texts. Even within Nowell, Scribe B miswrote Holofernes' name.<sup>110</sup> Similarly, the names in Junius 11's biblical texts have a number of uncorrected errors.<sup>111</sup> The *Genesis A* poet seems himself to have had something of an issue with names as he excludes a large number of obscure examples, but even those left in are often garbled by scribes: 'Nebreðes' (Vetus Latina *Nebroth*, Vulgate *Nemrod*), for instance, is rendered "ne breðer".<sup>112</sup> Nor do names escape common errors, even in this high status and carefully proof-read manuscript: *Moyse sægde* for *Moses sægde* is, for instance, probably due to haplography.<sup>113</sup> So mistakes with names are certainly not convincing evidence of the age or quality of the exemplar, but may perhaps indicate a lack of familiarity with some aspects of heroic history.

In any case, it seems broadly feasible that, by the eleventh century, *Beowulf* and the figures he interacts with were not well-known, even if the outline of the story and some of its background seemed familiar from other circulated legends.<sup>114</sup> The argument could be made that the presence of Scyld in its

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and *Beowulf*, *In Other Words: Transcultural Studies in Philology, Translation and Lexicography Presented to H.H. Meier on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, eds. J. Lachlan Mackenzie and Richard Todd (Dordrecht, 1989), 15–34, p. 23.

108 See his appendix, 'Scribal Errors of Proper Names', pp. 269–270.

109 'Beowulf Before *Beowulf*' p. 569 and 'Germanic Legend' pp. 53–56.

110 On 199 (BL202)v.7.

111 I am grateful to Andy Orchard for pointing this out to me.

112 At page 79, poetic line 1628, rendering *Genesis* 10:8. As discussed by Doane, 'Genesis A', p. 65. Cf. Sisam, 'Poetical Manuscripts', esp. p. 37.

113 *Exodus* line 517, Junius 11 page 169, as suggested in Peter Lucas, ed., *Exodus* (Exeter, 1994 revised edition), at p. 27.

114 Neidorf, 'Germanic Legend', pp. 53–56.

opening scene would be more resonant than the figure we now name it after.<sup>115</sup> Scyld had considerable potency in the eleventh century, as evidenced by his extensive use in poetry to praise Cnut.<sup>116</sup> He was well known in both Danish and English worlds, and some of the stories which circulated about him bear a resemblance to Beowulf's narrative in the Nowell text.<sup>117</sup> If the compiler knew of a text that opened with a figure significant in genealogy and resonant with mythical associations, he may have requested its inclusion without realising that it was mostly concerned with a forgotten figure. On the other hand, *Beow* – Scyld's son here and in the tradition represented in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* – is twice written as *beowulf* in the first few pages of the poem. This strongly implies that Scribe A or one of his predecessors knew the poem as one about 'Beowulf' and was less familiar with *Beow*.<sup>118</sup> Whatever their difficulties with heroic names, it is clear that Beowulf's name lived on, at least in this community, when perhaps other elements did not. The significance of Beowulf is probably highlighted by Scribe A's decision to capitalise his name in full when it starts fitts XXI (160 (BL163)v) and XXII (162 (BL165)v), and partially capitalise it at the opening of fitt XXIIII (166 (BL169)r).<sup>119</sup> The carving of Sigmundr on a stone from Old Minster, Winchester also tells us that heroic narrative was potent enough to form part of a major ecclesiastical project.<sup>120</sup>

115 Compare Cronan's argument that Scyld was the key resonant figure with others added to contextualise him in the royal genealogy contained in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, 'Containment of Scyld', pp. 120–124.

116 Roberta Frank, 'King Cnut in the Verse of his Skalds', *The Reign of Cnut: King of England, Denmark and Norway*, ed. Alexander Rumble (London, 1994), 106–124, esp. pp. 111–112.

117 In Saxo Grammaticus' thirteenth-century account, for instance, without using weapons 'Skioldus' defeats (but does not slay) a beast when young, is later betrayed by a slave, and wins a remarkable military victory late in life. Hilda Ellis Davidson, ed., and Peter Fisher, trans., *Saxo Grammaticus. The History of the Danes, Books I–IX* (Cambridge, 1979), Book I, p. 15. Saxo cannot have known the English tradition of Scyld / Skjoldr's mysterious appearance from the sea as he does not include it and it would surely have interested him.

118 See also R.D. Fulk and Joseph Harris, 'Beowulf's Name' in Seamus Heaney, trans., Daniel O'Donoghue, ed., *Beowulf: A Verse Translation* (London, 2002), 98–100.

119 As noted in this context by Orchard, *Companion*, n. 35 p. 103. As Orchard's table at pp. 94–95 shows, partial capitalisation of names when they start fitts is unusual but not exceptional (occurring also for Unferth at fitt VIII, 141 (BL143)r, and Wiglaf at fitt XXXVI, 187 (BL190)v, but not for Hroðgar on four occasions, and not for Beowulf when written by Scribe B at fitt XXVIII on 173 (BL176)v). Full capitalisation is only ever used for Beowulf.

120 The stone was excavated in 1965 and details were first published in 1966: see Martin Biddle, 'Excavations at Winchester 1965: Fourth Interim Report', *The Antiquaries Journal* 46 (1966), 324–332 and Dominic Tweddle, Martin Biddle, and Birthe Kjølbbye-Biddle, *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture Volume IV: South-East England* (Oxford, 1995) as §88, at



Neidorf's narrative of a tenth-century decline in knowledge of the legendary past is plausible,<sup>121</sup> but if it occurred then it is equally clear that heroic stories had a revival of sorts in the eleventh century with the use of heroic legend in court poetry and its depiction in the most important royal church in England. The reproduction of *Beowulf*, which also mentions Skjöldr and Sigmundr, fits well in the same context – perhaps even more so at a time when so many of its other stories were unfamiliar to its scribes.

It is worth noting that the scribes disagree on the spelling of the lead character's name. In its seventeen occurrences in his stint, Scribe B usually writes *Biowulf*; Scribe A never uses the *-io-* form.<sup>122</sup> It is hard to see any reason for Scribe B's use of an older form unless he is replicating what he found in the exemplar where his colleague chose to update to what had become the more regular *-eo-*.<sup>123</sup> Kiernan, indeed, suggests that all three instances where Scribe B wrote the name in the *-eo-* form have been altered from *-io-*, which would in turn potentially support the idea that the second scribe was extremely careful about how his hero's name should be spelt.<sup>124</sup> However, I do not see corrective activity in any of these sites and none of these instances is included in my list of corrections in Appendix 3. It is also worth noting that, despite numerous corrections to his colleague's work, he never changes Scribe A's spelling to the one he clearly preferred.<sup>125</sup>

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314.ii–322.i; S.C. Thomson, 'Sigmundr Fáfnisbani at the Eleventh-Century Court of Cnut', in Richard North, Erin Goeres, and Alison Finlay, eds., *The Anglo-Danish Empire: From Æthelred II to Cnut the Great*, The Northern Medieval World (Kalamazoo, MI, in preparation). On the interest in heroic narrative in Cnut's reign and the importance of the Sigmundr stone in demonstrating it, see Martin Biddle and Birthe Kjøbye-Biddle, 'Danish Royal Burials in Winchester: Cnut and his Family', *Danes in Wessex: The Scandinavian Impact on Southern England, c. 800–c. 1100*, eds. Ryan Lavelle and Simon Roffey (Oxford, 2016), 212–249, at p. 216.

121 Neidorf, 'Germanic Legend', pp. 54–56.

122 Scribe B writes *Beowulf* on three occasions: poetic lines 1971 (173 (BL176)r.14: the first time he writes the name), 2207 (179 (BL182)r.1), and 2510 (185 (BL188)v.13).

123 See Orchard, 'Reading *Beowulf*', pp. 52–53; full references are in the note to the name 'Beowulf, Biowulf', in Fulk et al., *Klaeber's Beowulf*, pp. 464–465.

124 *Beowulf* Manuscript, pp. xxvi–vii.

125 Kiernan suggests that Scribe B's capitalisation of *Biowulf* on 173 (BL176)v.20 was intended to highlight this as the correct spelling. This does not seem particularly likely; as Dobbie notes of this and Scribe A's capitalisation of *Wealhðeo* on 156 (BL159)v.18 and *Hroðgar* at 170 (BL173)r.14, all three are "undoubtedly" because they begin sentences rather than because they are names, '*Beowulf*' and '*Judith*', p. xxvii; *Hroðgar* and *Beowulf* both also coincide with the start of new manuscript lines, which often seems to increase the likelihood of capitalisation.

This does not make any difference to the strong probability that Scribe B is a more reliable witness to at least this aspect of the exemplar's spelling than Scribe A. Scribe B never uses medial *-io-* in *Judith*, but uses it often in *Beowulf* (on 115 occasions).<sup>126</sup> There is no reason for him to do this unless he were faithfully transcribing what he saw, at least in this respect. As a specific instance, each of the nine times Scribe B writes the feminine pronoun in *Beowulf*, he uses the *-io-* form. He also writes *sio* at poetic lines 2098, 2403, and 3061; and *þioden* at lines 2336, 2788, and 2810: there is a fairly high level of consistency in his approach to this sound. Scribe A writes the feminine pronoun on twenty occasions. Just the first two occurrences are spelt *hio*, the rest *heo*. The first instance is in the gnomic half-line "Gæð a wyrd swa hio sceal" (455b: "fate always goes as it must"). It is perhaps possible that in a traditional piece of wisdom the older spelling, which the editors of Klaeber's *Beowulf* suggest may have been seen as "more poetic", felt appropriate.<sup>127</sup> Whether that is the case or not, the easiest conclusion from the numerical evidence is that the exemplar regularly had *hio*, which Scribe A copied on the first two occasions before deciding to update thereafter. Just why he did so is unclear. Given that he never uses medial *-io-* in *Christopher* and copies it often in *Alexander*, he looks broadly inclined to replicate exemplar forms outside *Beowulf*, yet is less committed to doing so in this longer text. Whatever inspired Scribe A to start altering spellings, Scribe B – not party to, or disagreeing with that decision – seems consistently to have copied what he saw. If the pronoun can be regarded as a test case for the lead character's name, it is almost certain that the exemplar named him *Bio-* rather than *Beo-wulf* and that Scribe A's fleeting interest in updating orthography, to which we will return in Chapters 2 and 4, is responsible for the modern title for poem and man.

Working from this assumption, it is worth briefly returning to Scribe A's substitution of *Beowulf* for *Beow*. Given that *-io-* forms survived in the exemplar for Scribe B to copy, we can assume that it is Scribe A who changed the spelling of *Beowulf*'s name. *Beow* would not have been spelt *-io-* and so an earlier scribe who consistently wrote *Biowulf* is unlikely to have altered *Beow* to *Beowulf*. It is, then, almost certain that Scribe A is the one who first made this change. That he read *Beow* and assumed *Beowulf* when working on a manuscript that spelt it *Biowulf* is interesting. It tells us that he was not only familiar with the hero's story, but also that he had at least some passing acquaintance with a written form spelt *-eo-* which must have come from outside his exemplar's tradition.

126 Counts of *-io-* usage come from Dobbie, *Beowulf* and *Judith*, pp. xvii–xviii. He gives ratios of *-io-* to *-eo-* spellings as 1 : 73 for Scribe A and 4 : 17 for Scribe B.

127 Fulk et al., *Klaeber's Beowulf*, p. clv. Cf. Fleming, 'Ethel-weard', pp. 183–184 where he proposes a similar reading of Scribe A's use of the ethel rune [ᚫ].

This would in turn indicate that narratives about Beowulf (with that spelling, or with a sound that Scribe A assumed to be *-eo-*) were known and written in the eleventh century, whether or not they were elaborated in the same way as they are in this poem. This morass of evidence takes us little further than the probability that Beowulf was an old hero, with some aspects of his story well-known to the men who copied the poem despite an environment in which knowledge of heroic legend had been generally in decline. The scribes' variable attitudes to their exemplars, including Scribe A's apparent change of heart about retaining old-fashioned orthography, will be returned to in Chapters 2, 4, and 5.

### *Judith*

Judith's story as told in the Vulgate is set during Nebuchadnezzar's wars with the Medes. His general Holofernes leads the Assyrian army in a revenge attack on the peoples who, despite being nominally subject to him, have refused to fight in the wars. The Jewish city of Bethulia holds out against the attack, but is besieged, deprived of water, and set to fall in five days. The city elders give God a few days to come to their rescue, but are rebuked by the widow Judith, who tells the Bethulians that she can save them. Dressed to impress, she and a handmaiden travel to Holofernes' camp, taking only a bag of food. There, she convinces Holofernes that she has abandoned the doomed Jews: he is respectful, pleased that she is ready to follow his king, and stunned by her wisdom and beauty. At a banquet held in her honour, Holofernes drinks far too much – more than he has ever drunk before. During his drunken stupor, Judith beheads him with his own sword, packs the head into her food bag along with the elaborate canopy from above his seat, and escapes back to the city with her handmaid. Joyfully, the Jews attack their oppressors' camp. The Assyrian generals nervously try to wake Holofernes; when they discover his headless corpse, their resistance crumbles and they flee in panic. Celebrations ensue in Bethulia and later in Jerusalem, focused on praise of Judith as their saviour.

As it stands, the poem in the Nowell Codex opens during the feast, a much more riotous affair than in the Vulgate. Unlike the source figure, Holofernes is an aggressive drunkard, seeking to rape Judith and apparently well used to drinking heavily. There are no named characters apart from Judith and Holofernes, and no named places other than Bethulia.<sup>128</sup> This simplification

128 Rosemary Woolf, 'The Lost Opening to the *Judith*', *Modern Language Review* 50 (1955), 168–172; Griffith, *Judith*; Lucas, 'Place of *Judith*'.

makes it unlikely that the opening of the story as related in the Vulgate account was included in any detail.<sup>129</sup> The wider political context and the difficulties encountered by the Bethulian elders were doubtless excluded, otherwise they would have featured at the end. Part of this increased narrative leanness is a narrowing of the characters. In the Vulgate, Judith is simultaneously heroic and something of a seductress: clever, beautiful and intensely physical. Holofernes is a talented general: a broadly noble man on the wrong side in a war. By contrast, in the poem, Judith is a force of God on earth: pure, virtuous, almost disembodied; Holofernes is “satanised”.<sup>130</sup> This reduction in complexity results in a more homiletic and directed text. Two details appear to have attracted the poet’s particular interest. First, the dispersal of the Assyrian army becomes a full-blown slaughter in traditional Anglo-Saxon heroic style; second, the canopy over Holofernes’ chair is transferred to his bed and becomes an elaborate and symbolically significant “eallgylden fleohnet fæger” (“beautiful fly-net made of golden thread”).<sup>131</sup> In an otherwise sparse narrative, the ‘fly-net’ becomes an emblem of Holofernes’ weak luxuriousness.

Judith was certainly widely known in Anglo-Saxon England and her narrative was used by Aldhelm, Alcuin, and Ælfric. In addition to his homily, the last discusses the narrative in a letter to the ealdorman Sigeweard in 1005, noting that it tells “be hire agenum sige” (“about her own victory”).<sup>132</sup> As this is not entirely congruent with either the tone of his homily or with its explicit message, it is possible that he was referring to another translation – possibly even the poem preserved in Nowell.<sup>133</sup> In the same letter, a more detailed discussion of the value of the story of the Maccabees proposes that text as a model for the English attitude towards their enemies, presumably the Viking invaders led by Sveinn Haraldsson from the later 990s. The Nowell version has been

129 In addition to Woolf, see James F. Doubleday, ‘The Principle of Contrast in *Judith*’, *NM* 72 (1971), 436–441.

130 Griffith, *Judith*, p. 55. He gives a detailed discussion of the poem’s characters pp. 53–58, including the flattening of Judith’s somewhat sexualised character. Cf. Alexandra Hennessey Olsen, ‘Inversion and Political Purpose in the Old English *Judith*’, *ES* 63 (1982), 289–293; Ann W. Astell, ‘Holofernes’ Head: *Tacen* and Teaching in the Old English *Judith*’, *ASE* 18 (1989), 117–133; Heide Estes, ‘Feasting with Holofernes: Digesting *Judith* in Anglo-Saxon England’, *Exemplaria* 15 (2003), 325–350; Kaup, *Old English ‘Judith’*, pp. 193–197.

131 200 (BL203)r.13; poetic lines 46b–47. See Carl T. Berkhout and James Doubleday, ‘The Net in *Judith* 46b–54a’, *NM* 74 (1973), 630–634.

132 Jonathan Wilcox, ed., *Ælfric’s Prefaces*, Durham Medieval Texts 11 (Durham, 1995), pp. 40–41.

133 Hugh Magennis, ‘Contrasting Narrative Emphases in the Old English Poem *Judith* and Ælfric’s Paraphrase of the Book of Judith’, *NM* 96 (1995), 61–66, esp. pp. 63–65. Kaup, *Old English ‘Judith’*, n. 76 p. 65.

interpreted similarly: as an exhortation to Anglo-Saxons in the face of Danish invasions.<sup>134</sup> It has also been read, somewhat less persuasively, as an unsettling Christian subversion of the heroic ideal.<sup>135</sup> As with *Beowulf* and *Alexander*, and to some extent *St Christopher* and *Wonders*, its meaning is malleable, based on the context of reception and perhaps also dependant on the textual company within which it is presented.<sup>136</sup>

Judith was not a straightforward narrative for Anglo-Saxon writers. Aldhelm certainly found her a troubling figure, and asserts that the story demonstrates that “ornatus feminarum rapina uirorum” (“the adornment of women is the depredation of men”) in the prose *De virginitate*.<sup>137</sup> In his poetic version he is less disturbed, but firmly classes her as a type of pure chastity, possibly seeking to control this strong woman who rejects the authority of her elders and carefully deceives in order to kill. Ælfric, too, does not seem entirely comfortable with the text as he found it. He reassures his audience that he has related it just as it is in the Bible, and almost his last comment on the text is that Judith’s promise to take Holofernes into Bethulia was not a lie “þa þa heo ber his heafod binnan þam weallum” (“because she brought his head within the walls”).<sup>138</sup> After the ‘Amen’ to this first conclusion, he takes up the story again to claim (disagreeing with his own narrative) that Judith did not accept Holofernes’ armour, saying instead that she “amansumode mid ealle his gyrlan” (“cast it aside with all of his clothing”).<sup>139</sup> His third and final conclusion attempts to move away from the story of Judith altogether, reminding his audience of the story of Malchus.<sup>140</sup> Judith was plainly a significant figure, but not a comfortable one for at least two of the more conservative figures in the Anglo-Saxon church.<sup>141</sup>

134 Olsen, ‘Political Purpose’; Astell, ‘Holofernes’ Head’.

135 Fredrik J. Heinemann, ‘*Judith* 236–291a: A Mock Heroic Approach-to-Battle Type Scene’, *NM* 71 (1970), 83–96; Ivan Herbison, ‘Heroism and Comic Subversion in the Old English *Judith*’, *ES* 91 (2010), 1–25; cf. Estes, ‘Feasting with Holofernes’.

136 Kaup, *Old English ‘Judith’*, argues this for the source text and suggests an interest in shifting perspectives and meanings in the poem, throughout, esp. pp. 101–103, 128, 185–186.

137 § LVII.

138 His first conclusion is lines 339–355 in Lee, *Ælfric’s Homilies*, with the quotation here from lines 354–355. See also Mary Clayton, ‘Ælfric’s Judith: Manipulative or Manipulated?’, *ASE* 23 (1994), 215–227, esp. pp. 219–222.

139 His second conclusion is lines 356–371 in Lee, *Ælfric’s Homilies*, with the quotation here from lines 357–358.

140 Lines 372–381 in Lee, *Ælfric’s Homilies*. Clayton sees Ælfric as “like a dog worrying a bone here”, ‘Ælfric’s Judith’, p. 222.

141 Although cf. discussions which find Ælfric controlling the text and directing it to different audiences: Lee, *Ælfric’s Homilies*, VIII.1b; Kaup, *Old English ‘Judith’*, p. 66; Clayton (despite other remarks to the contrary), ‘Ælfric’s Judith’, p. 218. Peggy L. Curry finds Judith

However unsettling, the text was canonical throughout the period, and later ratified as such by the 1546 Council of Trent. Protestant England, however, rejected it. It is this disjunction which Kiernan suggests lies behind the dismembering of the Nowell Codex. He proposes that, under Matthew Parker's archepiscopacy and in the search for texts valuable to his reformers in the 1560s, whatever pieces surrounded *Judith* were extracted to form some official, probably hagiographic, compilation (which has now been lost). The poem was then, in Kiernan's narrative, discarded to keep company with non-Christian matter, though someone working under Parker still considered it valuable enough to record the last few lines, which are recorded in an Elizabethan hand (roughly imitating Anglo-Saxon letter-forms) at the end of the final side. That is, Kiernan's Elizabethan reformer found the text following *Judith* of interest and extracted it – but realised in the process that the end of the poem was thereby being fragmented, and chose to record it.<sup>142</sup> It was also of sufficient interest for Franciscus Junius to make his own copy.<sup>143</sup> Kiernan suggests that the manuscript originally containing *Judith* and surrounding religious texts was not contiguous with what is now the Nowell Codex; as discussed below I do not agree with this part of his argument, and it is not necessary to do so to agree that *Judith* was probably dismembered, partly reconstructed, and placed after *Beowulf* in the mid-sixteenth century.

Regardless, the extant poem corresponds to 12:10–16:1 of the Vulgate version. Its curtailed ending makes it clear that it was never a complete retelling of the scriptural account, while the freely expanded battle-scene demonstrates that no need was felt to translate closely what was transmitted. As similarly shown by the Old English *Exodus*, Anglo-Saxon poetic translations of scriptural sources were free to exclude incident as suited the retelling. In *Judith*, the poet chooses to focus on the central characters of Judith and Holofernes, with others reduced to background anonymity.<sup>144</sup> This adaptive process makes it difficult to be certain about any aspect of the source, although the dramatic

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to be a disturbing figure in most traditions in 'Representing the Biblical Judith in Literature and Art: An Intertextual Cultural Critique' (unpubl. PhD dissertation, University of Massachusetts, 1994).

142 Kevin Kiernan, 'The Reformed Nowell Codex and the *Beowulf* Manuscript', *ASE* 46 (2018). I am grateful to Professor Kiernan for sharing a pre-publication draft with me.

143 Now London, BL, Junius MS 105. See also E.G. Stanley, 'The Sources of Junius's Learning as Revealed in the Junius Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library', *Franciscus Junius F.F. and His Circle*, ed. Rolf H. Bremmer, Jr., *Dutch Quarterly Review Studies in Literature* 21 (Amsterdam, 1998), 129–158, esp. p. 162.

144 Woolf, 'Lost Opening'; Lucas' 'Place of *Judith*'; Hugh Magennis, 'Adaptation of Biblical Detail in the Old English *Judith*: The Feast Scene', *NM* 84 (1983), 331–337.

and comic scene of Holofernes' followers trying to wake his corpse is in 14:9 of the Vulgate.<sup>145</sup> Some other details, such as the food-satchel carried by Judith's handmaiden, may perhaps have been drawn from an older Latin version, but there is little in the text that could not have come from the Vulgate version or the poet's own creativity.

Stylistically, the proliferation of hypermetric lines and relatively frequent rhyme makes the text look later than the ninth century.<sup>146</sup> However, verses are not as irregular nor rhyme as frequent as in verifiably late texts, such as *The Battle of Maldon*, which was probably finished not long after 991 when the battle itself took place. There are no clearly early linguistic forms in the poem as it now stands and one very probably late form (117b: *hopian*).<sup>147</sup> In many ways it is linguistically closest to *St Christopher* which is probably tenth-century or later. For example, the preterite form of *cuman* is *cwom(on)* in *Alexander*, but in *Judith* and *St Christopher* it is always the regular late form *com(on)*. *Wonders*, *Alexander*, and *Beowulf* use medial *-io-* in place of Late West Saxon standard *-eo-* with varying frequency; neither *Judith* nor *St Christopher*, copied by different scribes, has any examples of *-io-*.<sup>148</sup> This does not mean that the earlier forms were never present: they may have been excised by a vigilant scribe in an earlier copy. But most Old English texts, including three others in this codex, have some kind of mixture of early and late forms. The total absence of early forms, even in a fragmentary text, suggests that *Judith* was a later composition. The only piece of evidence against this is the occasional use of *in*, where *on* would be truer to late West Saxon. In past analyses of Old English texts, this has been seen as evidence of Anglian transmission at some point in a work's history.<sup>149</sup> There is regular use of *in* throughout *Alexander*, in equal quantities to *on*, with a few instances in *Beowulf* and *Wonders*. A few also occur in *Judith*. However, this is not certainly indicative of early composition in an Anglian dialect, especially for poetry. And it is generally accepted that 'late West Saxon' was never used in a pure form, and that archaic forms were as acceptable to

145 Griffith's discussion of the poem's source material is *Judith*, pp. 47–61, with the comments I am following most closely here pp. 47–50.

146 These linguistic forms are also considered by Sisam, 'Compilation', Rypins, *Prose Texts*, and Malone, *Nowell Codex*: supplementary details are taken from those discussions where relevant. Lucas provides a useful summary of *Judith*'s linguistic features, 'Place of *Judith*' pp. 473–474.

147 Cf. Fulk, *Old English Meter*, pp. 335–336 and refs.

148 In these comparisons, I am mostly using data from Rypins, *Prose Texts*, Sisam, 'Beowulf Manuscript', and Fulk *et al.*, *Klaeber's Beowulf*, as well as some of my own counts and suggestions from editors of the various texts.

149 Rypins, *Prose Texts*, p. xxxviii.

poets in Old English literature as they were to their descendants in the eighteenth century.<sup>150</sup> Metrics is now generally regarded as a more reliable witness to dating than orthography, and the most recent discussions place *Judith* in the tenth century with differing degrees of confidence.<sup>151</sup> On the whole, then, *Judith* is highly unlikely to belong to the earliest group of Old English texts: it is almost certainly later than the ninth century. This would fit with a recent reading of the text as glorifying the urban space of Bethulia as part of a propagandistic effort to draw Anglo-Saxons into city settings.<sup>152</sup>

### Reading the Nowell Codex in the Eleventh Century

Having reviewed the texts themselves, it remains to suggest some ideas that result from reading them together. Along the way, some propositions are made about plausible cultural contexts for such readings. It is not necessary to accept this historical placement in order to find the readings themselves productive. Similarly, this is not intended to be an exhaustive analysis of this combination of texts: merely an engagement with it in order to suggest the value of reading Nowell as a single production and assuming that it had meaning to the people who produced it.

There are a number of specific details in the texts which recall one another. Some of these ideas may be coincidental, or are simply common to many Anglo-Saxon texts. So the dangers of fire, the worryingly seductive power of gold, and the arrogance of military leaders are present in each of the texts with broadly similar import.<sup>153</sup> Less frequent in the period is this codex's apparent interest in *Cyncocephali*, which appear in *St Christopher*, *Wonders*, and *Alexander*, with the related idea of humanoid beings with shining eyes in *Wonders* and

150 Fulk *et al.*, *Klaeber's 'Beowulf'*, pp. clvii–clix.

151 Hartman, 'Conservative Composition'; Bredehoft, 'Metrical Evolution', esp. p. 102.

152 M.D.J. Bintley, *Settlements and Strongholds: Landscape and Literature in Early Medieval England* (forthcoming). I am grateful to Dr Bintley for sharing a pre-publication draft of his discussion of *Judith*.

153 For some discussions of these ideas in relation to *Beowulf* see for instance Victoria Symons, 'Wreopenhilt ond wyrmfah: Confronting serpents in Beowulf and beyond', *Representing Beasts in Early Medieval England and Scandinavia*, Anglo-Saxon Studies 29, eds. Michael D.J. Bintley and Thomas J.T. Williams (Woodbridge, 2015), 73–93; Cameron Hunt McNabb, "'Eldum unnyt': Treasure Spaces in *Beowulf*", *Neophilologus* 95 (2011), 145–164 and references; Antje G. Frotsche, 'Treasure and Violence: Mapping a Conceptual Metaphor in Medieval Heroic Literature', *Neophilologus* 97 (2013), 753–774.



*Beowulf*.<sup>154</sup> Dragons, perhaps surprisingly unusual in Anglo-Saxon texts, appear in both *Wonders* and *Beowulf* (though the noun is missed out in *Wonders*). These clearly provide feasible motivations for drawing the texts together along the lines of Sisam's cataloguer's sense of a group of monstrous texts.

Sisam's observation that the codex has an interest in the monstrous has been widely discussed, but it is also surely of interest that all five of the texts are *anglice*. All of the narratives apart from *Beowulf* circulated more widely in Latin forms. *Wonders* is elsewhere found as a dual-language text and Nowell's copy (or a recent antecedent) was probably copied from an exemplar that had the Latin alongside Old English. This seems to be a codex at least partly defined by a decision to exclude Latin.<sup>155</sup> The phenomenon appears all the more striking when one considers how little interest the texts have in England and Englishness. It is immediately obvious to all undergraduate readers of *Beowulf* that this earliest extant English epic is not, in fact, about England at all.<sup>156</sup> Earlier readers, indeed, sited it in Danish and northern German traditions.<sup>157</sup> Of the codex's five extant texts, none mentions England or any English figures, or directly addresses an English audience at any point. Similarly, the codex ranges across time and space without coming close to eleventh-century England: from second-century BC Israel to sixth-century AD Scandinavia; fourth-century BC India to North Africa in the third century AD; a timeless and thereby contemporary Babylonia sitting in-between, perhaps tying them together. If the compiler had intended to give an imaginative survey of time and space on the borders of the Christian world, he could hardly have done a better job. Such a broad range sharing only a language could also be read as an argument that to be 'English' in the eleventh century was a composite identity, distinguished by the assimilation of other cultures.

On the other hand, not many Old English codices do spend time in England.<sup>158</sup> Junius 11's scriptural narrative is non-English. With the notable exception of the *Guthlac* texts, most of the Exeter Book poems are explicitly not in England or, like *The Ruin* and *The Wanderer*, only English to the extent that they are set in a familiar landscape. The Vercelli Book's poetic texts do not come to England,

154 Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, p. 14.

155 Cf. Thorlac Turville-Petre on the Auchinleck manuscript, Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, *Advocates MS 19. 2. 1*, in *England the Nation: Language, Literature, and National Identity, 1290–1340* (Oxford, 1996), Chapter 4, pp. 108–141.

156 Cf. Cronan, 'Containment of Scyld' at p. 136: "There is nothing that even remotely resembles an English perspective in the poem."

157 See for instance Marijane Osborn and Bent Christensen, eds., "'Skjöld': A Song by N.F.S. Grundtvig," *A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes and Reviews* 20 (2007), 35–43.

158 See also Howe, *Writing the Map*, pp. 154–155 & 193–194.

although its homilies address themselves directly to English audiences and *The Dream of the Rood* is set on a universalising spiritual plane. In each of these volumes there is another unifying idea and a more consistent religious focus which pre-justifies the general absence of Englishness, and yet still the country of production usually makes itself known through means other than language. The diversity of texts in the Nowell Codex, so many of which are translations, draws attention to their English production: that each is so different from the others, and so estranged from the historical context of their production, makes this 'strangeness' into a feature just as, or even more, visible in the eleventh century as it is today.

This drawing together of other parts of the world is simultaneously very modern and well-suited to some of the best known periods of Anglo-Saxon success, often characterised by a capacity to draw in and build from multi-cultural influences.<sup>159</sup> From the evidence of Sutton Hoo, Rædwald's Anglian kingdom was one such locus in the early seventh century; later in the same century, the culturally sophisticated Northumbria of Benedict Biscop was another; Offa's Mercia with its continental diplomatic connections and Arabic-influenced coins performed in the same way in the late eighth century. Alfred, in the later ninth century, constructed the idea of his kingship on Carolingian lines; his successors were more focused on controlling the Danish threat, but their most powerful moments are always marked by strong continental relationships, such as the tenth-century Benedictine Reform welcomed by Edgar, which saw strong Frankish influence. By contrast, Æthelred's reign (978–1016) was increasingly dominated by internal political disputes, Viking raids, and the crises of economic, cultural and political management that ensued.<sup>160</sup>

Unlike Æthelred's crisis-ridden reign, and akin to those earlier periods of success, Cnut's England in 1016–35 was highly aware of its influences from and its reach into Scandinavia, the Continent, and Christendom more widely. This is apparent in many of the reign's cultural constructions, but perhaps most vividly in the letters ostensibly written by Cnut to his people in 1020 and 1027.

159 See e.g. Rosamund McKitterick, 'England and the Continent', *The New Cambridge Medieval History 11: c.700–c.900*, ed. Rosamund McKitterick (Cambridge, 1995), 64–84.

160 McFadden, 'Social Context', sees *Alexander* and the other texts of the codex as engaging with precisely these concerns – "uncertain situations in which powerful figures may lose their struggles", p. 114. His argument is interesting, but does depend on the reader empathising with Holofernes, Dagnus, and Alexander in their respective texts, which is not how I read them. It should be noted that my characterisation of Æthelred's reign here is a caricature that has been challenged, most notably by Simon Keynes, 'The Declining Reputation of Æthelred the Unready', in *Ethelred the Unready: Papers from the Millenary Conference*, ed. David Hill, British Archaeological Reports British Series 59 (Oxford, 1978), 227–253.

The first of these clearly shows Cnut constructing himself to his people (with the assistance of Wulfstan) as a bridge between Scandinavia and England;<sup>161</sup> as in his 1018 law code, the king is figured as simultaneously English and Danish.<sup>162</sup> The later letter has him playing the same part, but this time acting as a bridge between England and the Continent. After his greeting, the first sentence proclaims “Notifico uobis me nouiter isse Romam” (“I make known to you that I have recently been to Rome”), and Cnut seems anxious for his subjects to appreciate that he was an honoured guest at the 1027 coronation of Conrad II as the Holy Roman Emperor. He says that:

ibi cum domino papa Iohanne et imperatore Cuonrado erat, scilicet omnes principes gentium a monte Gargano usque ad istud proximum mare, qui omnes me et honorifice suscepere et donis pretiosis honorauere; maxime autem ab imperatore donis uariis et muneribus pretiosis honoratus sum, tam in uasis aureis et argenteis quam in palliis et uestibus ualde pretiosis.

*I was there with the lord Pope John and the Emperor Conrad, namely all the princes of the nation from Mount Garganus to the sea nearest [to us], who all both received me with honour and honoured me with precious gifts; and especially was I honoured by the emperor with various gifts and costly presents, with vessels of gold and silver, and silk robes, and very costly garments.*<sup>163</sup>

He probably exaggerated the nobility present: Wipo (who was also there, but must have been more accustomed to such splendour) says that Conrad was

161 In the York Gospels (York, Minster Library, Additional MS 1), fols. 160v-r; Ker, *Catalogue*, §402, and edited by F. Liebermann, in *Die Gesetze Der Angel Sachsen Erster Band: Text und Übersetzung* (Halle A.S., 1903), pp. 273–275, translated by Dorothy Whitelock in *English Historical Documents Volume 1: c.500–1042* (London, 1955), §48, p. 415.

162 The code is edited and introduced by A.G. Kennedy, ed., ‘Cnut’s Law Code of 1018’, *ASE* 11 (1982), 57–81. On Cnut’s self-presentation as a unifying force, see S.C. Thomson, ‘Configuring Stasis: The Appeal to Tradition in the Reign of Cnut the Great’, *Stasis in the Medieval World? Questioning Change and Continuity*, eds. V. Symons and M.D.J. Bintley (London, 2017), 179–204.

163 Liebermann, *Gesetze Der Angel Sachsen*, pp. 276–277, §5. Translation from Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, §49, pp. 416–418. §1. The letter appears in William of Malmesbury’s *Chronicle* at §183, and in John of Worcester’s *Chronicle* (pp. 512–519). Both date it to 1031, but it can be confidently assigned to 1027 as numerous sources confirm this as the date of Conrad’s coronation. It is possible that Cnut made a second pilgrimage to Rome around 1030. Cf. Bolton, *Cnut*, p. 294.

crowned “in duorum regum praesentia, Ruodolfi regis Burundiae et Chnutonis regis Anglorum” (“in the presence of two kings – of Rudolf, king of Burgundy, and of Cnut, king of the Angles”).<sup>164</sup> But, as far as the English people were concerned, Cnut’s reign was being presented as on a par with that of Conrad’s Salian empire. This approach – constructing Cnut as international but rooted in English tradition – can be seen in almost every aspect of his reign, including his coinage designs, a new system of weights, the process of religious appointments and the design of his crown.<sup>165</sup> Connections were not just made with the Christian Continent. Skaldic poetry shows that by 1030 there was an “official party line” connecting Cnut with the ancient figure of Skjöldr, and Cnut’s choice of names for his children seems to be following a recent family tradition of using them to reach back into the royal Danish line.<sup>166</sup>

Despite Neidorf’s case for interest in heroic stories dying down in the later Anglo-Saxon period, the lively enjoyment of non-Christian narrative in the later Anglo-Saxon period cannot be doubted. Ælfric notes the existence of heathen stories in *Wyrðwriteras*, and implies that they are in the vernacular.<sup>167</sup> He also assumes that lay people sing and laugh along with eating and drinking when corpses are laid out, although he calls it *hæðenscype* and insist that priests should not join in.<sup>168</sup> He connects similar behaviour with impiety in his ‘Life of Saint Swithin’, but here again it is the drinking on which condemnation is focused.<sup>169</sup> A similar conception of poetry seems to be in Wulfstan’s mind when he commands that a monk should “ne beo ealusceop, ne on ænige wisan

164 ‘Gesta Chuonradi II imperatoris (The deeds of Emperor Conrad II)’, in *Die Werke Wipos, dritte Auflage*, ed. Harry Bresslau, *Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum*, MGH 61, Wiponis Opera 3 (Hannover, 1915), §xvi, p. 36 [p. 79]; translated in Robert L. Benson, ed., with Theodor E. Mommsen and Karl F. Morrison, trans., *Imperial Lives and Letters of the Eleventh Century*, Records of Civilization Sources and Studies 67 (London, 1962), p. 79.

165 Thomson, ‘Configuring Stasis’; Nils Hybel and Bjørn Poulsen, *The Danish Resources c. 1000–1550* (Leiden, 2007), pp. 326–327; M.K. Lawson, *Cnut: England’s Viking King* (Stroud, 2004 revised edition, first published 1993), pp. 98, 104 & 138–139; Bolton, *Cnut*, pp. 296–297 & 307–309; contrast Niels Lund, ‘Cnut’s Danish Kingdom’, *Reign of Cnut*, ed. Rumble (1994), 27–42 at pp. 34–35.

166 Frank, ‘Verse of his Skalds’, p. 112; Thomson, ‘Configuring Stasis’.

167 When he says that lessons about kingship can be found in English and Latin books, and correlates Latin books with the Bible, W. Braekman, ed., ‘*Wyrðwriteras*: An Unpublished Ælfrician Text in Manuscript Hatton 115’, *Revue belge de philologie et d’histoire* 44 (1966), 959–970, p. 968, lines 5–9.

168 ‘Pastoral letter for Bishop Wulfsgie’, in *Councils and Synods with other Documents Relating to the English Church Volume 1: AD 871–1204*, ed. Dorothy Whitelock (Oxford, 1981), 199–226, at p. 218.

169 Victoria Thompson, *Dying and Death in Later Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge, 2002), pp. 83–84.

gliwige mid him sylfum oðrum mannum" ("not be an alepoet, nor in any way make merry on his own or with other men").<sup>170</sup> It is the drinking and the behaviour in such contexts that seems to worry Ælfric and Wulfstan, not the stories themselves, although they do clearly belong together.<sup>171</sup> In a text preserved alongside some of Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*, Mary of Egypt is troubled by a longing for "sceandlicra sceopleoða" ("shameful songs"), which she connects with alcohol and sex in firmly secular contexts.<sup>172</sup> As it is directly translating the Latin ("luxuriosis canticis") this does not necessarily reflect the views of writer or audience, but the consistent association of (vernacular) poetry with secular contexts and behaviours is clear.<sup>173</sup>

In Cnut's reign, however, non-Christian narrative could certainly be found in religious contexts. In the skaldic poetry produced and performed in Winchester and London, quite apart from frequent reference to Skjöldr, an understanding of mythic allusion is taken as read. While Sigvatr Þórðarson's stanzas on Cnut take the innovative steps of celebrating his Christianity and visit to Rome,<sup>174</sup> Hallvarðr Hárekblei does not shy away from using more traditional imagery:

Ullar lézt við Ellu ætt leifð ok mó reifðir  
sverðmans snyrtiherðir sundviggs flota bundit.<sup>175</sup>

*Of Ullr's swim-steed the elegant strengthener, you had your fleet moored  
To Ælle's patrimony and delighted the gulls of the sword-mistress.*

170 Roger Fowler, ed., *Wulfstan's 'Canons of Edgar'*, EETS 266 (London, 1972), §59, p. 14. 'Make merry' is a fairly bland translation of *gliwige*, following Fowler's glossary, for a word that can be used in more specific senses of, for instance, playing an instrument. Bosworth-Toller suggests 'act the gleeman'. Cf. Christina Lee, *Feasting the Dead: Food and Drink in Anglo-Saxon Burial Rituals* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 141 and n. 68.

171 As the context of Wulfstan's remarks implies: in the 'Canons of Edgar', §58 is against drunkenness, and §60 against the swearing of oaths. Cf. Aaron Ralby, 'The Poenitentiale Pseudo-Ecgberti and the Old English Precepts', *Notes and Queries* 57 (2010), 6–10, where this injunction is discussed with parallel concerns, p. 8.

172 Hugh Magennis, ed., *The Old English Life of Saint Mary of Egypt* (Exeter, 2002), §19, line 627. The life is preserved in the early eleventh-century London, BL, Cotton MS Julius E. vii. Another copy was in the badly burned Otho B. x, alongside a Christopher text; see Cantara, 'Mary of Egypt'.

173 The Latin text is also printed by Magennis, *Mary of Egypt*, with this phrase pp. 609–610.

174 *Knútsdrápa* §10 and §11. Roberta Frank argues for this kind of detail as radical in 'Verse of his Skalds', pp. 121–124.

175 Text from Finnur Jónsson, ed., *Det norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning B: Retter Tekst. Band 1: 800–1200* (Copenhagen, 1912–15), stanza 3b, p. 293. Translation is Richard North's, from 'Eulogies on King Cnut: Knútsdrápur' (unpubl.). I am grateful to Prof. North for permitting me to use this translation.

‘swim-steed’: a swimming horse, i.e. a ship; ‘Ullr’s ship’: a shield, whose ‘strengthener’ is the general readying men for battle, here Cnut; ‘Ælle’s patrimony’: England; ‘sword-mistress’: a Valkyrie, whose ‘gulls’ are ravens; Cnut ‘delighted’ the ravens by causing men to be killed in war so they can feast.

Englandi ræðr Yngvi einn (hefsk friðr at beinni)  
bqðrakkr bœnar nqkkva barkrjóðr ok Danmqrku<sup>176</sup>

*The prince, the battle-bold reddener of the bark of the ship of prayers, alone  
rules England and Denmark; peace becomes easier.*

‘battle-bold reddener of the bark’: byrnie; ‘ship of prayers’: breast

ok hefr (odda Leiknar) jalm-Freyr und sik malma  
(hjaldr qrr haukum þverrir hungr) Nóregi þrungit.<sup>177</sup>

*Beneath him the Freyr of metal clamour (the hunger he weakens,  
Skirmish-keen, of the hawks of a spears’ ogress) has also pressed down  
Norway.*

‘metal clamour’: battle, whose ‘Freyr’ is a king; ‘spear’s ogress’: valkyrie, whose ‘hawks’ are ravens, whose ‘hunger weakens’ because of the feasting they can enjoy during the war.

These verses go much further than sharing a Scandinavian narrative: they allude to valkyries and name Freyr, including a reference to him as Yngvi and allusion to a “conceptualised fertility ritual”.<sup>178</sup> Freyr was a central figure in pre-Christian mythology; here he is a synonym for the king of England. Both verses require understanding of the idea of valkyries, and the capacity to associate them with glory. As we know from Sighvatr Þórðarson, skalds went to and performed for Cnut in Winchester. And it was in Cnut’s reign that a large-scale carving depicting at least moments from the narrative of Sigmundur Vqlsungsson was erected in Old Minster, Winchester.<sup>179</sup> Vernacular, non-Christian narrative

176 Text from Jónsson, *Skjaldedigtning B*, stanza 6, p. 294. Translation from Bolton, *Cnut*, p. 265.

177 Text from Jónsson *Skjaldedigtning B*, stanza 6, p. 294. Translation from North, ‘Eulogies’.

178 Bolton, *Cnut*, pp. 265–266 and refs.

179 See note 120 above.

may have been revived and was certainly institutionalised from 1016; it is in this context that it is easiest to imagine the drawing together of old, half-forgotten, heroic stories with biblical and hagiographical narrative.

Another idea explored by these texts which resonates in Cnut's reign is that of travel. All five texts seem to play with the idea of individuals moving from one place to another; often, the one travelling is seen as threatening by the residents while the texts invite the audience to be sympathetic to their (usually triumphant) travellers.<sup>180</sup> *Judith* offers a broadly static set up between two opposed camps, with a single mobile central figure whom we are invited to admire, and yet whose behaviour is deceptive and disturbing.<sup>181</sup> In the extant Old English poem, she has already infiltrated the Assyrian camp; she goes on to kill Holofernes in his own bed and receive a reward of his, possibly blood-stained, armour. There is a close parallel between Judith's journey to Holofernes' court and return home with his head and the sequence of murderous journeys undertaken in *Beowulf*. Like Beowulf, she provides an unlikely and unlooked for solution to a nation's problems. The bag she carries to the camp with food and bears away with Holofernes' head is analogous to Grendel's *glof* which, according to Beowulf, the monster uses to carry his victims away from Heorot (lines 2085b–91a). Like both Beowulf and Grendel's Mother, she sets out to the hall of her enemy and returns bearing a head. The parallel with Grendel's Mother is perhaps the most interesting: both are widows; both invasive women; both slaughter when the feast is over; both are surprisingly powerful compared with their male kin; both display their victims' heads. Ultimately, of course, she is cast as hero against a demonic and absurd Holofernes: there cannot be any question about the balance of narratorial sympathy and her journey is a cause of joy for Bethulians and readers alike. Leaving aside the threat presented by these powerful female figures, the principle that a journey is undertaken with hostile intent, with the rider that a stranger in the hall is a probable enemy, is clearly established in the codex.

This is also the case in *St Christopher*, where the monstrous Christopher invades and disrupts Dagnus' ordered city. As with *Judith*, the sequence with the saint's journey and arrival is lost. Contemporary accounts, such as the summary in the *Old English Martyrology* and fuller Latin versions of the *Acta Sanctorum*, spend a great deal more time in Dagnus' mind than in Christopher's. It is the king's fascination with a *Cynocephalus* with which we engage, and his fear

180 Cf. Howe, who argues a central concern with moments of return, *Writing the Map*, p. 178.

181 Kaup persuasively argues that Judith's capacity to move is key to her power, *Old English 'Judith'*, n. 170 p. 159, pp. 163–164 & n. 208 p. 179.

of disorder that drives both the narrative and our understanding forward: as humans, as spectators, and as an increasingly centralised and urbanised nation, an Anglo-Saxon audience engages easily with Dagnus' basic concerns and interests. But the text is a *passio*, and Christopher's distinction is his Christianity: if Dagnus' base motivations of voyeurism and fear drive the narrative, Christopher's faith shapes and controls it. Ultimately, since Dagnus and his citizens learn something valuable, the invader brings change not destruction; his foreign ideas offer not suppression but freedom and glory. As in *Judith*, journeying is transformative, and the one who travels is more powerful than the static mass; also like *Judith*, there is some ambiguity in the presentation of the indisputably sympathetic traveller. A dog-headed man and a wronged woman wielding a sword are both threatening spectres of instability for an Anglo-Saxon audience. Both texts perhaps seek to take readers on a journey, from a conservative concern with the status quo to rejoicing at an outsider's triumph.

*Wonders* is, in this sense, more complex: there is no consistent visiting figure. Rather, the reader is invited to see him- or herself as the visitor: the reader travels, becomes the outsider, and hence is a 'stranger in a strange land'. Read progressively, the codex could be seeking to draw readers into the scheme they have observed taking place in previous texts. In the world of *Wonders*, the reader is often the invader, and more threatening than the creatures, peoples, and plants encountered. In §9, the most extended narrative of the text, humans are deliberate and cynical invaders of another's territory. A man ventures across a river to steal gold, sacrificing one animal to a hideous death and manipulating another with its child's cries in order to secure gold without personal damage. By far the most disturbing monster of *Wonders* has a strong element of tragedy and pathos: the *Donestre* of §20 entraps visitors by appearing to know them and their families; having eaten them, it realises its own loneliness and weeps over their heads. The fiery hens of §3 present no danger at all, unless someone chooses to seize them, in which case they self-immolate. As in *St Christopher*, it is easiest for a reader to identify as the visitor, and yet there is a great deal of sympathy invited for those threatened in their homes.

Having been mentioned in §2, Alexander makes two further appearances towards the end of *Wonders*, first to destroy repulsive (but not threatening) women in §27, and then to be impressed by the goodness of people who give women away to travellers in §30. The reader's vicarious journeying thus receives another mediation; different readings could identify with Alexander in his responses to these tribes, or distance themselves from the king and judge his troubling activities. Both readings create the same complexities (about whether the traveller or host is more vulnerable) raised by the preceding texts, and these ambiguities around a reader's sympathy and fear are explored much further in *Beowulf*.



This balance of engagement and sympathy continues in *Alexander*. The narrator tricks his way into the enemy camp when visiting Porus. While there, he takes childish delight in disguising himself and manipulating his opponent. This device is the climax of the encounter between the two kings; surprisingly, its focus is not on confrontation but on deception, associated with criminality in the Anglo-Saxon world.<sup>182</sup> It is not entirely clear how readers are expected to respond to Alexander here: is he absurd, disturbing, ingenious, or all three? In an undamaged codex, Judith's entry into the Assyrian camp – another deceptive invasion – would have been an interesting comparison. Beowulf's capacity to enter different contexts and triumph therein also seems echoed, though his approach, like Christopher's, lacks any intent to deceive and perhaps stands as the more noble behaviour.

In more conventional invasive contexts, and despite his incredible successes, Alexander is repeatedly represented as being outside his comfort zone. A repeated idea is that he relies on native guides for the most basic of information; Alexander is not able to make direct linguistic contact with the people he meets, nor can he be sure if he is being led astray. In the final sequence, where he enters the sacred grove and hears prophecies from the Trees of the Sun and the Moon, the language being spoken is made explicit, and it changes for each conversation. As an outsider, Alexander is profoundly vulnerable: exposed, isolated, naked. Again, there seem to be echoes of Judith who is isolated at Holofernes' feast and vulnerable, possibly unclothed, in his bed. Her justified and controlled violence, though, stands in contrast to Alexander's extreme acts of aggression when he feels himself to be vulnerable. Likewise, her absolute faith in God's help contrasts with his persistent fear that he is being deceived; Christopher's body is exposed to torture but protected by divine authority. Read in the context provided by Nowell, Alexander looks more and more like a man stranded by lack of knowledge of God, resorting to attempts to establish his dominance precisely where he is least in control and most afraid through adolescent, macho lashing out.<sup>183</sup> Elegantly enough, the text ends when Alexander is utterly defeated and alone, and no longer able to behave in this way. Unlike Judith, he cannot return to his earthly home; unlike Christopher, he has no hope of a new heavenly home; unlike the reader or narrator in *Wonders*, he is isolated and far from home. Read in this context, Alexander's travelling fails.

182 T.B. Lambert, 'Theft, Homicide and Crime in Late Anglo-Saxon Law', *Past and Present* 214 (2012), 3–43, at p. 9 and references. This association is often reflected in the literature: see for instance *Guthlac A* lines 108–132. See also McFadden, 'Social Context', who sees Alexander becoming "like a monstrous being" at this moment, p. 105.

183 Compare McFadden, 'Social Context', esp. p. 104.

*Beowulf* is deeply concerned with these issues of travelling, invasion, and the relative merits of traveller and host. Repeatedly, individuals travel to the homes of others, while the poet sometimes shows more sympathy for the lone traveller, even when apparently monstrous, than the hosts. So, during their respective invasive journeys, Grendel is constructed as wretched as well as vicious (lines 100–25; 164–69; 702b–21a), Grendel's Mother burns with righteous revenge (lines 1255b–78), as does the dragon on its destructive journeys (lines 2293b–2323; 2554–56a). This reflects a wider poetic tradition in which texts such as *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer*, and *Widsith* engage with the individual sundered from society: the corpus of Old English poetry is deeply concerned with the plight of the traveller. *Beowulf* is carefully depicted as the powerful outsider when he arrives in Denmark, as likely to threaten Heorot as to save it. Comparable with Dagnus' losses when he rejects Christopher's ideas is Wealhtheow's rejection of *Beowulf* as a potential heir. Her desire to keep succession firmly within her family is shown to doom them (lines 2024b–2069a). The same principle is explored but with a different outcome when Heardred is killed by Onela as a result of welcoming the exiles Eadgils and Eanmund (lines 2379–2388). *Beowulf*'s support of Eadgils is, though, ultimately successful as Onela is overthrown and the Swedish crown retaken by a Geatish ally (lines 2391–2396). It is perhaps also notable in this context that so many major events take place when the central figure is away from home: some obvious examples are *Beowulf*'s adventures in Denmark; his confrontations with sea-monsters, *Dæghrefn*, and the dragon; *Hygelac*'s fatal disaster.

The codex, then, teases out travelling as a common but relentlessly unnerving experience in the Anglo-Saxon world, and simultaneously offers reflections on the risks and opportunities of welcoming outsiders. These ideas are common throughout the period, but the specific focus in this manuscript on invasive figures bringing unsettling yet ultimately positive change is surely especially resonant with the circumstances of Cnut's accession to the throne. England's early experiences of his temperament were not positive: most infamously, in 1014, fleeing England immediately after his father's death, Cnut had the hostages he was holding mutilated and set ashore in Lindsey.<sup>184</sup> Even ignoring the decades of raiding in which Cnut participated with his father, his re-invasion and war with Edmund Ironside in 1016 was brutal, with bloody and destructive battles at Penselwood, Sherston and the unidentified *Assandum*

184 The degree of mutilation is not certain, though it was clearly vicious: ASC MS E records only the removal of hands and noses; C and D add castration. See also Lawson, *Cnut*, p. 150; Bolton, *Cnut*, p. 86.

as well as the siege of London and other engagements in Mercia.<sup>185</sup> The vast majority of English families must have included men who were disfigured, disabled, or dead as a result of their new king's invasive journey: physical and emotional scars which would not have receded swiftly from sight or memory. Once king, however – as has been well-documented elsewhere – Cnut was concerned to present himself as civilised and Christian.<sup>186</sup> He was enormously generous to the Church in England and France; an impressive donation to Chartres around 1020 inspired Bishop Fulbert to write what may be a revealing letter:

te quem paganorum principem audieramus, non modo Christianum, uerum etiam erga ecclesias atque Dei seruos benignissimum largitore magnoscimus

*You, whom we had heard to be a pagan prince, we now know to be not only a Christian, but also a most generous donor to churches and God's servants.*<sup>187</sup>

Cnut's reputation, then, even by 1020, was as a heathen – yet after his death he was widely regarded as one of the most generous and religious of England's rulers.<sup>188</sup> This was not just achieved through bribery, but also by behaving mercifully. In 1017, for instance, having suppressed some form of challenge from the Mercian Northman, son of ealdorman Leofwine, Cnut did not persecute his family: indeed, his brothers Eadwine and Leofric regularly come second in charters.<sup>189</sup> Cnut, probably under the influence of Archbishop Wulfstan, seems to have actively worked to show himself as a bringer of peace: arriving in violence but ultimately bringing new ideas, wealth, and peace.<sup>190</sup> It is precisely

185 The clearest narrative of the conquest is in Lawson, *Cnut*, pp. 25–28.

186 Thomson, 'Configuring Stasis' and refs.

187 Frederick Behrends, ed. & trans., *The Letters and Poems of Fulbert of Chartres* (Oxford, 1976), pp. 66–69. This extract from the letter is also quoted by Lawson, *Cnut*, at p. 146.

188 Jan Gerchow, 'Prayers for King Cnut: The Liturgical Commemoration of a Conqueror', in *England in the Eleventh Century: Proceedings of the 1990 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. Carola Hicks (Stamford, 1992), 219–238, at e.g. p. 235.

189 Bolton, *Cnut*, pp. 71–72; cf. p. 81 on Æthelnoth's election to Canterbury.

190 See e.g. Dorothy Whitelock's reading that it was Wulfstan's "influence that made a pious king out of a young Viking", *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* (London, 1939; 1952 second edition), p. 31; Lawson, *Cnut* at e.g. pp. 131 & 145; Bolton, *Cnut* at e.g. p. 77; Gerchow, 'Prayers' at p. 236; Heslop, 'Patronage of King Cnut', throughout.

this process that the Nowell Codex repeatedly explores: *Alexander*, indeed, could be read as an example of the chaos experienced when such an invader has not been tamed by the church.

In the same vein, the codex seems to argue for limits to what can be achieved by military authority. The fragility of temporal authority – that earthly ideas of strength and weakness are misreadings of the true nature of power – is a common principle in Christian texts. Unsurprisingly, this theme recurs in *St Christopher*. Like many martyr texts, it delights in pitching an apparently all-powerful tyrant against a passive saintly figure, with the latter victorious through calm resistance and divine intervention. In the extant text, it is interesting that emphasis is placed on the failure of Dagnus' technologies. Neither the iron bench he orders to be specially constructed – long enough to cope with Christopher's height – nor the immense oil-fuelled fire beneath it, have the least effect on the saint's equanimity. The post erected for his execution by bow-and-arrow firing squad fares no better. When God finally permits his death, the text loses any interest in the machinery of execution and merely notes "hraðe fram þam cempum he wæs slegen" ("swiftly he was killed by those soldiers"). This principle – that man-made objects and the technologies of violence are weak – potent in much medieval hagiography, echoes throughout the codex.

In *Beowulf*, objects made by men are usually intended as powerful statements of intent and authority, but are repeatedly exposed as lacking any true strength. Heorot is perhaps the most significant in a succession of crafted products which fail to achieve any form of permanence in the world. It is no sooner constructed than invaded, and the first time its glory is mentioned, so is its destruction (lines 81–85). More directly resonant of *St Christopher* are Beowulf's difficulties with weapons. Hrunting, the sword lent him by Unferth, fails to damage Grendel's Mother (lines 1524b–25a). Nægling, Beowulf's ancestral sword, fares even worse: having failed to bite into the dragon at 2578b–79, it shatters in 2680b. It is not only swords that fail the hero: an iron shield specially designed to confront the dragon (lines 2337–41a) merits no further comment from the poet during the battle than the laconic note that

Scyld wel gebearg  
life ond lice læssan hwile  
mærum þeodne þonne his myne sohte  
(lines 2570b–72)

*The shield effectively protected the famous lord in life and body for less time than his purpose demanded*

The iron shield echoes Dagnus' iron bench: both are mighty expressions of a ruler's power and wealth; both are iron constructions intended to combat monstrous threats to the kingdom; both fail to achieve any effect at all.

Given that it is a narrative about one of the great conquering figures of history, it is perhaps surprising that the same theme pervades *Alexander*.<sup>191</sup> Apart from a brief note that "we[...]eft edniowunga hæfdon micle gefeoht" (§23: "then we had a great battle again"), the only truly military opponent he encounters in the text is King Porus. Historically, Alexander defeated Porus at the river Hydaspes, an event narrated in some related texts.<sup>192</sup> Aspects of the defeat of Porus' elephants in those texts are included separately later in *Alexander* as a fight with wild elephants in §28, reflecting the text's preference for futile conflicts with nature above martial prowess. In both *Alexander* and the *Epistola*, battle is anticipated and prepared for, but does not take place: on the morning of the battle in §25,

eode Porrus se kyning me on hond mid ealle his ferde 7 dugoþe þa he hæfde ongieten þæt he wið me gewinnan ne meahte.

*King Porus came into my hands with all of his army and his nobility, as he had perceived that he was not capable of fighting against me.*

Elsewhere, Alexander's default position is to attempt force, resulting in a repetitive pattern of his men dying in futile attempts to dominate the landscape and peoples they encounter. Throughout a full night of fighting monstrous animals from §17 to §21, the narrative stress is on failure. In the first two of these sections, serpents invade and are repelled with weapons and fire. Both times, the monsters are killed but the final statement dwells on the length of the conflict and the numbers of men who died, rather than on any sense of victory. In §19 and §21, various creatures invade and kill with no narrated attempt to fight back at all. These sandwich the fight in §20 with a single *dentestyrannus*, probably a

191 Cf. McFadden's characterisation of the text as a narrative of "military failure and verbal success", 'Social Context', p. 105.

192 'The Alexander Romance' describes the conflict in Book 3 §80, R. Telfryn Pritchard, ed. & trans., *The History of Alexander's Battles: Historia de preliis, The J<sup>l</sup> version* (Toronto, 1992), pp. 75–76; much more detail is given by Arrian in the *Anabasis*, Book 5 §8–18, in Arrian, *Alexander the Great: The 'Anabasis' and the 'Indica'*, ed. and trans. Martin Hammond (Oxford, 2013), pp. 144–153.

rhinoceros. This section's final statement does contain the successful slaying of the monster, but is preceded by Alexander's absolute failure to protect his men:

mid þy ic þa getrymede þæt mægen greca heriges, 7 we us wið him scyldan woldon, þa hit ofslōh sona minra þegna. xxvi. ane ræse, 7. lii. hit oftræd, 7 hie to loman gerenode þæt hie mec nænigre note nytte beon meahton.

*When I was drawing together the strength of the Greek army, and we intended to protect ourselves against him, then it immediately slew 26 of my soldiers in one charge and trampled on 52, and turned them into cripples so that they could no longer be of any use to me.*

In a process typical of Alexander's narratorial voice, he briefly becomes one with his men when in personal danger and fighting, but soon steps aside again to judge them from his sole vantage point. Ultimately, he is unable to do anything about his impending death. The whole sequence with the prophetic trees is in keeping with the persistent idea of the failure of martial technology and lordship. Alexander and his men are required to enter the grove naked, shorn of all the military equipment they have depended on. His first encounter with the trees takes place as one of three hundred; the second with "mine þrie ða getreowestan frynd" (§37: "three of the most trusted of my friends"); the third time, Alexander wakes early and speaks to the trees with only the priest as company. A narrative inconsistency impedes the pattern: at the end of the section his companions are mentioned as if they had been present all along. But the principle of the decline of lordship – so powerful an idea in *St Christopher*, *Beowulf*, and *Judith* – is reinforced in §41, the final section of the text, which emphasises the idea that Alexander cannot trust his men:

Ond ne geherde ða ondsware þara treowa ma manna þonne þa mine getreowestan freond, ond hit nænig mon ut cyþan ne moste þy læs þa elreordegan kyningas ðe ic ær mid nede to hyrsumnesse gedyde, þæt hie on þæt fægong þæt ic swa lytle hwile lifgean moste. Ne hit eac ænig mon þære ferde ðon ma ut mæran moste þy læs hie for ðon ormode wæron 7 þy sænran mines willan 7 weorðmyndo, ðæs hie mid mec to fromscipe geferan scoldon.

*And none heard that answer from those trees apart from those men who are my truest friends, and none of them was allowed to make it known lest those foreign kings who I had previously compelled to my service might rejoice that I had so little time to live. Nor might any of them reveal it to my army,*

*lest they become lazy or cowardly regarding my desire and fame, because they must go with me to glory.*

Having made this statement about the role of his men and the limited capacity of his closest friends, Alexander ends by desperately seeking to be a part of *any* masculine community. He briefly links himself to Aristotle, one of the letter's putative recipients, and then to "oðrum eorðcynigum" ("other earthly kings"), before breaking away once again to an isolated community of one as his honour and glory become "maran[...]þonne ealra opra kyninga þe in middangearde æfre wæron." ("greater than all other kings that ever were in the world.")

This final statement is on 128 (BL131)v, facing the opening of *Beowulf*. Along with the general thematic interest it shows in the poem's ideas, it can be read here as a form of commentary on the success of Scyld Scefing. Like Alexander, Scyld dominated "æghwylc þara ymbsittendra" (9: "all of those dwelling nearby"). The Old English translation of the *Epistola* ends earlier in the narrative than any known parallel, implying that this correspondence may not be coincidental.<sup>193</sup> Alexander's own commentary on the probable rebellion of his tributary kings must prompt reflection on just how effective or long-lasting Scyld's enforced peace could be. Political stability is a recurrent concern in *Beowulf*: Hrothgar's constructed community at Heorot is disrupted by Grendel; the future peace of the Danes is going to be destroyed by the marriage that seeks to bind its peace; the rule of Hygelac and Hygd is destroyed by his death and their son's failure; Beowulf's death is read as a portent of doom and is preceded by the same kind of cowardly behaviour from his close companions that frightens Alexander.<sup>194</sup>

In keeping with the loosening of ties of loyalty which is feared by Alexander and experienced by Beowulf, *St Christopher* is structured around Dagnus' profound fear of losing his authority. A key irony of the text is that the harder he tries to hold on to power, the more it slips from his grasp: individual soldiers, larger groups, and finally even arrows refuse to do as he commands. We cannot now know the precise course of events in the Nowell *St Christopher* but it seems likely that Dagnus' fears of insurrection were clearly expressed: the

193 See Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, p. 135 and refs. and p. 139. On the deliberate placement of comparable texts on facing sides, see e.g. Thomas Gobbitt, 'Manuscript Contexts of the Old English *frīð*', pp. 55–56, on Cambridge, CCC MS 383.

194 Cf. Biggs' interesting suggestion that Beowulf "embodies the problems of the kingdoms he seeks to aid", 'History and Fiction', p. 156.

first scene in the extant text has three soldiers turning on the king and being executed for their rebellion.

*Judith's* raw materials fit well into this scheme. The prime aesthetic interest in the scriptural narrative is in the unexpected prowess of a woman and the failure of a great military force at her hands. The poem, however, places little emphasis on the undermining of traditional and militaristic structures of power: indeed, a great deal of attention is paid to the victory of the Israelites and they are called *here* (161b: "army") even when simply waiting for Judith's return. The poet focuses on the restoration of rightful authority rather than the futility of earthly power structures. Even here, however, there is space for a fine exploration of the topos of failed lordship bonds: the Assyrians gather impotently around Holofernes' bed-chamber, too late to protect him, intimidated by rather than close to him, and lacking the protection he should offer. This in turn reflects the contrast between the close support Scyld Scefing receives even after death and the abandonment of Beowulf when he fights the dragon.

Of the five texts, *Wonders* has the least to say about temporal authority and the military technology it uses to exert power. In some senses, however, it tells precisely the same story of a world beyond the control of iron. The very presence of so many inexplicable creatures is in itself a challenge to establishing a controlled and structured civilisation. More precisely, *Wonders* offers a range of beings that cannot be conquered. Many cannot even be approached: it is not even possible to fight a chicken if it bursts into flame when you get close. Others cannot be fought, but it is possible to deceive them: the ants guarding gold, for instance, can be evaded (but not destroyed) if one is prepared to sacrifice a large camel. Occasionally, no conflict is required, when marvels share cultural principles with the narrator and can be described as "geþungen ond gedefe" (§23: "virtuous and noble"), *gedeflice* (§25: "courteous") and *fremfulle* (§30: "generous"). It is interesting that there is no suggestion that the three plants which produce jewels and balsam can be acquired through conquest. They are all simply noted as existing with no indication as to where they are or who profits from them.

The only attempt to exert military control over any of the marvels comes from Alexander the Great. In one of the more intriguing comments of the text, the narrator explains Alexander's attitude to the bestial women who have boars' tusks, oxen's tails, camels' feet, and asses' teeth:

Of hyra unclennesse hie gefylde wæron from þæm miclan macedoniscan  
Alexandre. Ða cwealde he hy þa he hy lifiende oferfon ne mehte, forþon  
hy syndon æwisce on lichoman unweorþe.



*Because of their repulsiveness, they were destroyed by that great Macedonian Alexander. He killed them when he was unable to conquer them alive, because they have repulsive and worthless bodies.*

This reads as the ultimate victory of aggressive militarism: the extermination of another people. But the evidence of the text stands against Alexander's achievement: illustrated and persistently in the present tense, some women may have been killed, but the race was not destroyed.<sup>195</sup> Violence is not a final solution.

Read on its own, *Beowulf* clearly has an interest in temporal authority, particularly that of kings. Precisely what it has to say about kingship in general and specific leaders in particular is unclear and a matter of continuing critical debate. In the context of the Nowell Codex, however, it seems clear that its compilers are inviting questions about how authority can be exerted and what happens when the power which is formed from the structures and technology of one culture encounters those of another; it seems also repeatedly to propose that military power is at best only a temporary solution to conflict. This is a timeless idea: it applies very well to the West's technology-focused and impotent engagement in the Middle East in the twenty-first century. But it also aligns closely with the concerns of eleventh-century England under Cnut: a period in which the English, especially those outside the centres of power, were uncertain about and afraid of their incoming ruler, but also one in which all sides were profoundly aware of the exhaustion that war brings and the need to find resolution beyond conflict.

Beyond these political concerns, many of the Nowell texts seem to delight in subversion and irony. Surely one of the most comic scenes in Old English literature comes in *Judith*. Holofernes' headless corpse lies within his golden bed-chamber; his captains stand outside, terrified of disturbing him but desperate for his leadership, and make increasing amounts of noise in a vain effort to awake him. The humour is ironic, working by inviting us to detach from the participants and view the scene as a whole in order to appreciate its absurdity.<sup>196</sup> This perspective is transferred to the Hebrews' rout of the

195 Mittman and Kim, *Inconceivable Beasts*, p. 30.

196 Susan Kim, 'Bloody Signs: Circumcision and Pregnancy in the Old English *Judith*', *Exemplaria* 11 (1999), 285–307, at pp. 294–295; Tom Shippey, 'Grim Wordplay': Folly and Wisdom in Anglo-Saxon Humor', *Humor in Anglo-Saxon Literature*, ed. Jonathan Wilcox (Cambridge, 2000), 33–48; Paul Szarmach, 'Ælfric's *Judith*', *Old English Literature and the Old Testament*, eds. Michael Fox and Manish Sharma (London, 2012), 64–88, pp. 81–82;

Assyrians, for the ‘battle’ is so one-sided as to be absurd, and it illustrates the ironic Christian principle of the weak overcoming the strong, especially given the poet’s concern to emphasise that all of the inhabitants of Bethulia were involved in the fighting. Although not enough of the scene survives to judge, these comic elements put the Assyrians’ excessive feasting in the same near farcical light.

Concealment, fear, and noise also seem to be associated with comedy in *Beowulf*. As Beowulf and Grendel grapple in Heorot, the Danes cower outside, terrified by the mere sounds of the fight and Grendel’s howl of agony. The apparent cowardice of the Danes here is unlikely to have been part of the original intent: it is the *Norðdenum* (“North-Danes”) who hear the screaming, which the poet probably intended to show how widely Grendel’s pain could be heard, rather than to make Hrothgar’s people appear cowardly. Similarly, the hapax legomenon *ealuscerwen* is now usually read as a metaphorical “sharing of ale”, where the bitterness of the drink is conflated with the bitterness of fear. It may originally have meant something like “good fortune (*alu*) was prescribed (*scerwen*)”: the poet may be presenting the Danes as fully aware of their good fortune.<sup>197</sup> However, the *Andreas* poet seems to have (mis)understood it in the same way as I suggest here when he transposed *meodu-* (“mead”) for *ealu-*, and it is highly probable that any knowledge of *alu*, known from runic inscriptions in the fifth century, had faded by the early eleventh. In the context of the Nowell Codex, Hrothgar’s Danes know and understand little, and – from our superior perspective, seeing simultaneously inside and outside the hall – are ludicrously afraid when they hear their monster being defeated. They stand in ironic parallel to Grendel’s first appearance in the text. For him, the sounds of human revelry drifting out of Heorot are painful and horrible. Now it is the Danes who are outside, horrified by what they can hear. In both comic effect and in the bird’s-eye perspective which produces the irony this scene parallels that in *Judith*, in addition to echoing the later scene when, seeing the blood of Grendel’s Mother, the Danes assume that Beowulf has died

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Mark Amodio, *The Anglo-Saxon Literature Handbook* (Oxford, 2014), with ‘*Judith*’ at pp. 294–299. Jonathan Wilcox argues for the humour inherent in all saints’ lives, finding “a style that works on multiple levels, allows and sometimes exploits a surface that is deliberately, detectably, and definably funny” in ‘Eating People is Wrong: Funny Style in *Andreas* and its Analogues’, *Anglo-Saxon Styles*, eds. Catherine E. Karkov and George Hardin Brown (New York, 2003), 201–222, p. 207. By contrast, Kaup finds that the scene invites us to empathise with the Assyrians’ loss, *Old English ‘Judith’*, pp. 176–178.

197 Richard North, “‘Wyrð’ and “wearð ealuscerwen” in *Beowulf*”, *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s. 25 (1994), 69–82.

in her Mere. Whether these scenes can be read as ‘funny’ is debatable, but the exploitation of different perspectives for irony, and the potential interplay of the two scenes, is clear.

Inversion, together with an ironic control of the audience’s perspective on it, recurs in the prose texts. The basic story of *St Christopher* is built out of such inversion: a dog-headed cannibal becomes a saint epitomised by calmness in the face of anger and takes power away from an urbanised but psychotic king. The intense debate between saint and king about which one is truly stupid (partly missing from Nowell) surely has a comic aspect. By his use of capitals Scribe A highlights yet another moment of reversal: when arrows shot at Christopher turn and blind Dagnus instead.<sup>198</sup> In parallel narratives, Dagnus is usually a ludicrous figure who insists on having Christopher brought to him so he can gawp at the sight, then falls off his throne in fear when the saint stands before him. In the extant Nowell text he falls to the ground in a dead faint when he sees Christopher alive and well in the fire. Ironically, the harder he clings on to power, the more it shrinks from him; the more people he executes, the less powerful and more absurd he becomes. Similarly, Alexander’s self-presentation teeters on the edge of the absurd.<sup>199</sup> His confident narrative is undermined by persistent failure, and his pseudo-scientific claim to be investigating foreign lands is undermined by acts of wild brutality. In a first-person text, the perspectival game which enables irony becomes more sophisticated: the reader engages with an imagined author, shaping the text which exposes its own narrator to judgement.<sup>200</sup> The readings which this codex thus invites are sophisticated, for irony calls into question boundaries between positive and negative, strong and weak, home and away, narrator and author, reader and subject.

198 S.C. Thomson, ‘Capital Indications: How Scribe A Thought Readers Should Engage with the Nowell Codex’, in *Proceedings from the Fifth International Conference ‘Language, Culture, and Society in Russian / English Studies’*, eds. Emma Volodarskaya and Jane Roberts (in preparation).

199 On the translation’s enhancement of his egocentricity, see Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 135–137; cf. Douglas R. Butturf, ‘Style as a Clue to Meaning: A Note on the Old English Translation of the *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem*’, *English Language Notes* 8 (1970), 81–86.

200 On the use of first-person to help the reader learn different behaviours from Alexander, see Kathryn Powell, ‘Laying Down the Law: First Person Narrative and Moral Judgement in the Old English *Letter of Alexander to Aristotle*’, *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 86 (2004), 55–68; cf. Kim’s reading that the use of first-person challenges the “process of identification itself”, ‘Death and *Alexander*’, p. 34.

## Suggestions

This chapter has sought to demonstrate two things: that the five extant texts of the Nowell Codex are an unusual combination in many ways; and that reading them together can be very productive, particularly in relation to Cnut's accession to the English throne. That the texts are so disparate in terms of subject matter, original composition, and genre does not, in the end, matter. When placed together in a single framework, the texts renew and challenge one another, offering a range of different readings which are generally less strongly present when each text is read in isolation.<sup>201</sup> It should also be apparent that, despite their religious themes, *Judith* and *Christopher* were not 'safe' texts in the period, both offering somewhat difficult narratives of subversion and the power of outsider figures; Judith in particular is known to have been a challenge to Anglo-Saxon authors. The argument presented here for the resonance of these ideas with Cnut's reign is certainly not a comprehensive argument for dating the codex to that period; still less is it an argument against placing its production slightly earlier, in Æthelred's reign.<sup>202</sup> Chapter 2 will consider dating in more detail, with equally suggestive but inconclusive results. More significant for engaging with the community that put the codex together is the potential sophistication of the intertextual readings on offer within it, and the vision it presents of a Christian community constructed from internationalism and the heroic past. As will be discussed further in Chapters 2 and 3, there is a great deal of evidence that the Nowell Codex was a thoughtful and ambitious production; as Chapters 4 and 5 propose, this ambition was probably recognised by the scribes but they were often unable to match it. Chapter 6 will seek to place this sort of ambitious communal intertextual project into the context of manuscript production in the late Anglo-Saxon period.

201 Cf. Cooper, *Monk-Bishops*, esp. pp. 7–10 and refs. in n. 15 p. 8.

202 McFadden (see note 160 above) has made an argument for the codex, particularly *Alexander*, working in Æthelred's reign, and Neidorf, in 'Genesis of the *Beowulf* Manuscript', has found connections between *Beowulf* and Æthelred's legislation.

## Reconstructing the Nowell Codex

This chapter will propose when and how the Nowell Codex may have been made, what form it may have originally taken, and how many exemplars lay behind it. To these ends, I shall first discuss the dating and localisation of the manuscript by its scribal hands and its limited known history, then the probable sequence of gatherings, the original sequence of texts, and the sequence of scribal activity. This discussion will underpin subsequent chapters about the work of the scribes and the eleventh-century project to re-present *Beowulf* in this volume.

My conclusion is that it seems likely that the Nowell Codex as we have it now was conceived of as a single project and that “considerable planning went into its compilation”.<sup>1</sup> There is little clear evidence, but it is possible that the codex was compiled in Wulfstan’s ‘sphere of influence’,<sup>2</sup> most likely in Mercia, at some point in the period 1016–23. The codex probably originally opened with a religious section, including *Judith* and *St Christopher* and at least two other hagiographical texts, then moved into the secular world with *Wonders* and *Alexander*, before ending with *Beowulf*. Two scribes worked together on the texts; others may have been involved in planning or helping to manage the work. This project probably combined at least three different exemplars, one containing *Judith* and *St Christopher* and some other religious texts, at least one with *Wonders*, and a third containing *Alexander* and *Beowulf*.

### Dating and Placing the Scribes of the Nowell Codex

The transition from one scribe to the other takes place abruptly: on the fourth folio of a gathering, half-way through poetic line 1939b of *Beowulf*, but after the end of a full manuscript line, 172 (BL175)v.3, as shown in Figure 1. Why they divided the text in this way remains a mystery, and the contrast between their hands has been much discussed. Kiernan argues that the site of the handover, occurring soon after the transition from Denmark to Geatland in the final third of the poem, must be significant, and he suggests that two different texts were

<sup>1</sup> Lucas, ‘Place of *Judith*’, p. 464.

<sup>2</sup> I consciously borrow this and most palaeographical terminology from Peter Stokes’ use in *English Vernacular Minuscule from Æthelred to Cnut circa 990–circa 1035* (Cambridge, 2014).

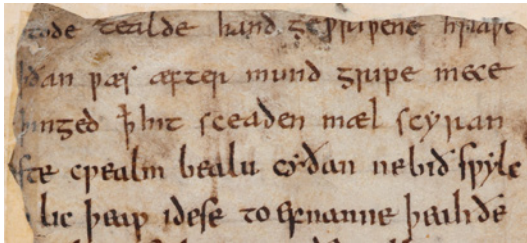


FIGURE 1  
Scribal handover at 172 (BL175)  
v.1-4.  
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A. XV.

brought together here for the first time, with Scribe B composing a bridging section to join them. He suggests that the difference between their hands, had folio 172 (BL175) been lost and *Beowulf* consequently split between the stints, would have resulted in a secure modern assumption that the two parts were different reflexes of one tradition, rather than a single text produced in one time and place.<sup>3</sup> However, his claim for an authorial Scribe B must ignore several inconvenient questions about exactly where the split appears, the full picture of Scribe B's relationship with the text, and strong linguistic and textual evidence of unity within the poem itself. Kiernan has not been widely followed and I do not engage with this aspect of his argument further here.

At first glance, the division seems to suggest that the first scribe was suddenly unable to complete his work and the second took over: it has been suggested that he may have died.<sup>4</sup> Given, though, extensive evidence that the scribes worked fairly closely together, the probability that Scribe B's work originally sandwiched A's rather than coming after it, and the rather common occurrence of such sharing in manuscripts of the period, this is unnecessary. The abrupt switch is sometimes seen as indicative of a low standard of production: that the people putting the Nowell Codex together simply did not care how it looked. There is some evidence to suggest that other scribes sought to match their hands in very high grade (usually religious) work, as in the Book of Kells, and to make moments of handover such as this appear as smooth as possible.<sup>5</sup>

3 Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, p. 257; cf. Hans-Jürgen Diller, 'Contiguity and Similarity in the *Beowulf* Digressions', *Medieval Studies Conference Aachen 1983: Language and Literature*, eds. Wolf-Dietrich Bald and Horst Weinstock (Frankfurt, 1984), 71–84, who follows Kiernan and argues that the two scribes may have authored parts of their respective sections of the poem. Though he finds it unlikely, Clark is also prepared to consider two parts which were united at some point, 'Scandals in Toronto', p. 227. Damico proposes that the Danish section was composed in the 1030s but does not link this directly with the scribes or comment in any detail on the handover, *'Beowulf' and the Grendelkin*.

4 Leonard E. Boyle, O.P., 'Nowell Codex', pp. 31–32.

5 Conner, 'Matched Scribal Hands'. The Book of Kells is Dublin, Trinity College Library MS A.I.(58).

But there is equally strong evidence that such a seamless transition was not normally regarded as necessary: equally apparently mismatched pairs feature in at least four other manuscripts from the period.<sup>6</sup> Stokes finds “a great deal of variety in script” in many manuscripts produced in this period, particularly at Worcester;<sup>7</sup> similar variance also occurred in earlier periods.<sup>8</sup> Even major centres at the height of the Benedictine Reform did not force all scribes to write in Caroline minuscule, as is shown by the two scribes of London, BL, Royal 13.A.xv with a visually startling handover from one writing in Square minuscule to another working in Caroline minuscule from fol. 8v to fol. 9r.<sup>9</sup> Other examples abound. It seems most likely that the regular practice was to assign individual scribes a set number of exemplar gatherings to copy into new gatherings which would eventually be sewn together to make the codex. When a scribe reached the end of the set exemplar gatherings, he handed the partially written new gathering to his colleague, who had responsibility for continuing the project. Some Anglo-Saxon scriptoria sought to produce page-by-page reproductions when copies were being made of some texts – or at least scribes worked very hard to complete a set amount of text in a set amount of space – but these are the exception rather than the rule and most of the time such handovers would naturally have occurred in the middle of a page. The contrast between the two scribal hands in the middle of *Beowulf* is thus most likely to be simply a commonplace product of scriptorium working conditions, telling us little about the scribes’ lives or their community’s attitude to this project.<sup>10</sup>

Scribe A writes ‘English Vernacular minuscule’,<sup>11</sup> often called Insular minuscule in earlier scholarship: an English script showing strong Caroline influences which became widespread during the eleventh century for writing in English.<sup>12</sup>

6 Orchard, *Companion*, pp. 21–22 and see Chapter 6 below.

7 *English Vernacular Minuscule*, p. 95; cf. pp. 97–107 where he discusses Worcester manuscripts.

8 David Ganz, ‘Latin Script in England: Square Minuscule’, *History of the Book*, ed. Gameson (2012), 188–196, at p. 191.

9 D.N. Dumville, *English Caroline Script and Monastic History: Studies in Benedictinism, A.D. 950–1030*, *Studies in Anglo-Saxon History* 6 (Woodbridge, 1993), pp. 4–5. The manuscript, a copy of Felix’s *Vita Sancti Guthlaci* from Worcester in the mid- to late-tenth century, can be viewed online through *Digitised Manuscripts*, at <[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Royal\\_MS\\_13\\_A\\_XV](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Royal_MS_13_A_XV)>, last visited 19/5/16.

10 Cf. Conner, ‘Matched Scribal Hands’, pp. 41–42.

11 Stokes, *English Vernacular Minuscule*, pp. 7–8.

12 Other useful descriptions of Scribe A’s hand are those in Rypins, *Prose Texts*, pp. vi–viii; Kenneth Sisam, ‘The *Beowulf* Manuscript’, *Studies*, ed. Sisam (1953), 61–64; first printed in *Modern Language Review* 11 (1916), 335–337, pp. 61–63; Malone, *Nowell Codex*, pp. 17–20;

He writes with a relatively fine pen and uses deft, pointed strokes giving his hand a delicate aspect.<sup>13</sup> As shown in Figure 2, teardrop-shaped *a* is characteristic. His *æ* is also teardrop-shaped, which is more unusual in the script's early development and indicates that Scribe A had not previously learned another way of writing; he was using a 'pure' English Vernacular minuscule form rather than adapting a previously learned *æ* shape. In further evidence of this, his *e* is always round and often has an extended tongue; *g* is always open. His *ð* and *d* are identical apart from the crossed ascender, with the ascender at about 45° to the bowl and rising relatively high. His *y* is almost always dotted and usually straight, though he does occasionally use a rounder, still dotted, form. There were three *s* shapes available to eleventh-century scribes: the round *s* as used now; a high *s* like an uncrossed *f* standing on the ruled line; a low *s* in the same shape but with the curved top closer to the ruled line and descender going through it. Scribe A never uses the low shape; he generally prefers high *s* but regularly uses the round form at the start of words.

Scribe B writes in Square minuscule which shows some influence from Caroline forms. This script was widely used in tenth-century England and replaced by English Vernacular minuscule at some point early in the eleventh.<sup>14</sup> Stokes



FIGURE 2

*Some letter-forms characteristic of Scribe A's hand, resized for comparison. Taken from (l-r, top to bottom): 92(94) (BL95)v.18; 93(91) (BL96)r.3; 92(94) (BL95)v.20; 92(94) (BL95)v.6; 93(91) (BL96)r.12; 93(91) (BL96)r.19; 93(91) (BL96)r.11; 142 (BL144)r.11.*

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Taylor and Salus, 'Compilation', at pp. 199–200; Dumville, 'Beowulf Come Lately', p. 50; Doane, 'Scribal Performance' throughout. For Caroline minuscule, see T.A.M. Bishop, *English Caroline Minuscule* (Oxford, 1971); Dumville, *English Caroline Script*.

13 Cf. Ker, *Catalogue*, §216; Gerritsen, 'Supplementary', p. 299.

14 D.N. Dumville, 'English Square Minuscule Script: The Background and Earliest Phases', *ASE* 16 (1987), 147–179; D.N. Dumville, 'English Square Minuscule Script: The Mid-Century Phases', *ASE*, 23 (1994), 133–164.



finds a number of scribes using or strongly influenced by Square minuscule in the eleventh century which he sometimes, but not always, construes as evidence that they were working close to the year 1000.<sup>15</sup> By comparison with his colleague, Scribe B's hand seems heavy and rigid: his pages are more crowded with ink, and ascenders and descenders frequently interfere with one another. As shown in Figure 3, his *a* is flat-topped, though with the left stroke usually a little shorter than the right, lending it a slight teardrop aspect. The *e* is horned and *e* in *æ* is high. His *g* always has an open body and a closed loop, and occasionally has a tilde-shaped top stroke. Most of these are clear indications of training in the shapes and habits of Square minuscule, though with Caroline influence apparent. On the other hand, he seems much less certain about other letter shapes. While his *y* is always dotted, it is sometimes straight, sometimes round, and occasionally *f*-shaped. His *d* is usually bilinear with a very short top stroke, but is sometimes more extended and concave down, identical to his *ð* but without a cross-stroke. These were all normal letter-forms available to scribes writing Square minuscule, though some (such as his straight *y*) may indicate awareness of the later script used by his colleague. I have not been able to discern any policy in his variant choices; they are simply used interchangeably, which is not unusual in the period.<sup>16</sup> Klegraf discusses the scribes' use of *ð*



FIGURE 3

*Some characteristic and variant Scribe B letter-forms, resized for comparison.*

*All taken from 173 (BL176)r, lines (l-r, top to bottom): 6, 13, 2, 8, 12, 12, 1, 13, 19, 7, 19, 8, 5.*

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<sup>15</sup> Stokes, *English Vernacular Minuscule*; contrast e.g. pp. 96–97 and pp. 121–123; see also e.g. pp. 111 & 162–163.

<sup>16</sup> Michael Gullick has argued that uncertainty about letter-forms is indicative of weak scribal performances in ‘Across the North Sea: English Caroline in Norway and Sweden’,

and *p* in comparison with one another and across their different texts; broadly, he finds that Scribe A is fairly flexible and adjusts his usage according to the text he is copying, where Scribe B consistently uses each shape in the same way.<sup>17</sup> This may indicate that Scribe B was more 'set in his ways', analogous to his use of an older script which may have been outdated at the time of use, but this is far from conclusive and there is a significant amount of varying evidence for the scribes' respective approaches in the manuscript. The Nowell Codex scribes were writing in a period of transition, as Square minuscule was taken out of use and English Vernacular minuscule became dominant for writing in Old English. It is a period in which the younger scribe has (probably) only been taught the newer script, and the older scribe may be, to some degree, uncertain about the validity of the letter-forms he uses.

In combination, these two scripts present a fundamental difficulty for palaeographers. Kiernan has sought to place the codex in the reign of Cnut (1016–35), on the primarily historical and literary grounds that the story of *Beowulf* would have been more appropriate and meaningful in that period. The major response is Dumville's, and is rooted in palaeography as a science, finding it highly unlikely that Square minuscule was being used as late as 1016. The debate matters because it places the creation of the Nowell Codex either during or before the reign of a Danish king in England, and this finding, in turn, makes significant differences to the meanings *Beowulf* and the compilation as a whole can hold. The last charter Dumville has identified as using Square (rather than Caroline) minuscule for a Latin text is S 864, from 987.<sup>18</sup> The earliest dateable instance of English Vernacular minuscule is that in the (Old English) Parker Chronicle for the 1001 entry, probably copied at Winchester.<sup>19</sup> The entry was written at some point between 1001 and 1013; between 987 and 1013, then, it seems clear that scribes producing official documents were moving

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at Liminal Networks: Western Palaeography to c. 1100, A Postgraduate Conference, KCL 3/6/14. Crick finds eleventh-century scribes attempting to reproduce older scripts susceptible to mis-use of *y*-shapes and other letter-forms, 'Sense of the Past', esp. pp. 11–14. Winfried Rudolf argues for letter-forms in Old English poetry as indicative of interpretation rather than lack of control in 'Riddling and Reading: Iconicity and logographs in Exeter Book Riddles 23 and 435', *Anglia* 130 (2012), 499–525, e.g. p. 514. Doane notes B's varied *s* in contrast to A's consistent Caroline high *s*, 'Scribal Performance', n.10 p. 73. Doane also argues for Scribe B's variation in *a*, which does not seem considerable to me: the 'cc' form is sometimes employed, but infrequently, and more noticeably in *Judith* than *Beowulf*.

17 Klegraf, 'Faithful Copying', esp. pp. 213–215.

18 'Beowulf Come Lately', pp. 53–54.

19 Cambridge, CCC MS 173, fols. 28v–30r; Ker locates it at Winchester in *Catalogue* §39.

away from using Square minuscule, first when writing Latin, and then when writing anything at all. This does not, of course, necessarily tell us much about the scripts used for writing less official texts. It should also be noted that Stokes identifies a late form of Square minuscule (Dumville's Phase v) being used in an Old English charter produced at Canterbury between 1013 and 1020.<sup>20</sup> Even discounting this example, the key difficulty is that non-documentary texts are undated, so charters and chronicles are the only measure for the use of scribal forms. We know so little about the circumstances in which scriptoria produced books like the Nowell Codex that we are reliant on the more certain evidence from quite different textual products. In isolation and on this basis, Scribe B's hand would probably be dated late in the tenth century; Scribe A's to somewhere in the first quarter of the eleventh. So the challenge is to identify the latest possible period for Scribe B to be writing as he does, and to match that up with the earliest possible period for Scribe A to be writing as he does.

In what is still the most reasonable response, Ker dates the codex to "s. x/xi".<sup>21</sup> He is clear about his meaning: the manuscript was probably written, roughly and without absolute boundaries, within the period 975–1025. But so much has come to rest on the shift of a decade forward or back that the interpretation of Ker's *Catalogue* has come to represent a minor branch of *Beowulf* criticism in its own right.<sup>22</sup> It should be noted that other manuscripts dated by Ker (and others) to the same period have not attracted the same degree of controversy and that more flexibility is permitted to palaeographers in most cases. As an example, Scheide 71, containing the Blickling Homilies, contains two or perhaps three hands. Based on the distinction between the two main scribes – Scribe B this time looking newer and Scribe A older – it is currently dated 971–1025 by Princeton, and most scholars would accept this range because the combination of hands defies a narrower one.<sup>23</sup> The same challenge stands for a contemporary copy of the *Old English Martyrology*.<sup>24</sup> Here there is one hand – Scribe A – writing a much newer script than the three that follow,

20 Oslo and London, Schøyen Collection MS 600, *English Vernacular Minuscule*, pp. 121–123.

21 Compare Stokes' "within hailing distance of the year 1000", *English Vernacular Minuscule*, p. 94.

22 See F. Leneghan, 'Making Sense of Ker's Dates: The Origins of *Beowulf* and the Palaeographers', *The Proceedings of the Manchester Centre for Anglo-Saxon Studies Postgraduate Conference* 1 (2005), 2–13; Dumville provides a slightly scornful overview of scholars who do not understand Ker's dating in 'Beowulf Come Lately', pp. 50–51.

23 Cf. Stokes, *English Vernacular Minuscule*, p. 152; Patrick W. Conner, *Anglo-Saxon Exeter: A Tenth-Century Cultural History* (Woodbridge, 1993), p. 59.

24 London, BL, Cotton MS Julius A. x, fols. 44–175.

some of which exhibit features of early tenth- and even ninth-century script.<sup>25</sup> The sheer weight of earlier hands, and the very early features of the last, push Stokes to suggest that it was probably “written in the last few years of the tenth century or the first few years of the eleventh,”<sup>26</sup> but later observes that it could have been produced later in the period, at a centre “where the new eleventh-century features were slow to be introduced.”<sup>27</sup> Similarly, Ker’s dating of the two hands in London, BL, Royal 13 A. xv to “s. x<sup>1</sup>” and “s. x<sup>2</sup>” has not attracted any confusion or difficulty that I am aware of; it is simply acceptable to ascribe manuscripts with an unexpected combination of script types to a lengthy time period.<sup>28</sup> Similar examples abound.<sup>29</sup> If the Nowell Codex did not contain *Beowulf*, Ker’s dating up to 1025 would have remained entirely uncontroversial, just as it is for all of these productions.<sup>30</sup> Palaeography can indicate a likely

25 Stokes, *English Vernacular Minuscule*, pp. 111–112. Scheide 71 and Julius A. x are discussed further in Chapter 6.

26 *English Vernacular Minuscule*, p. 111.

27 *English Vernacular Minuscule*, p. 154.

28 See the discussion of this manuscript in Peter J. Lucas and Jonathan Wilcox, with contributions by A.N. Doane, Matthew T. Hussey, and Phillip Pulsiano, *ASMMF Volume 16: Manuscripts Relating to Dunstan, Ælfric, and Wulfstan: The “Eadwine Psalter” Group*, MRTS 343 (Tempe, AZ, 2008).

29 Beyond those noted above are all four hands in Cambridge, CCC MS 140; Scribes C and D in Cambridge, Trinity College R. 5. 22 (717), fols. 72–158; Scribe A in London, BL, Cotton MS Otho C. i vol. 2; Scribe A in London, BL, Cotton MS Julius E. vii; London, BL, Cotton MS Otho B. ii + Otho B. x fols. 61, 63, and 64. See also Orchard, *Companion*, p. 22 on the four MSS closest in date to Nowell, and Stokes’ discussion of each of them: CCCC 140 at pp. 142–143; Trinity R. 5. 22 (717) at p. 95; Otho B. ii + B. x at pp. 96–97; Otho C. i vol. 2 at pp. 110–111; Julius A. x at pp. 111–112 & 154; Julius E. vii at pp. 143–144; Scheide 71 at pp. 152 & 162–163. Gneuss and Lapidge, *Handlist*, date all of these to x/xi apart from Otho B. ii + B. x which they give as “x<sup>2</sup> or x/xi”; Royal 13. A. xv, dated x med; the original contribution to CCCC 140 dated xi<sup>1</sup>; Otho C. i vol. 2 and Julius E. vii are both dated xi in. On the basis of his paper ‘N.R. Ker’s Dating’, Kiernan would add the charter bounds in Exeter, Cathedral MS 2525 and London, BL, Cotton MS Augustus ii. 69; I have not seen the manuscripts but the samples he presented were convincing. Scribe D (fol. 8v.1–9) in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley MS 579 could also be added to this list, though I have not seen this manuscript and am basing this suggestion on the hand’s description in *DigiPal*; cf. Stokes, *English Vernacular Minuscule*, pp. 140–141. Dumville accepts a dating of xi<sup>1</sup> for CCCC 140, but does not see squareness in any of the four hands, where Stokes suggests that they “retained the weight and many of the letter-forms from Square minuscule, particularly horned *a* and *æ*, but they also excised other forms from their script and took on at least some of the new proportions and aspect.” *English Vernacular Minuscule*, p. 143.

30 This is Stewart Brookes’ observation, and I am grateful to him for discussing the dating of Square minuscule, and many aspects of scribal behaviour, with me.

date-range; given the many unknowables, and the fact that it attempts to classify an aspect of human behaviour, it cannot dictate precise dates.<sup>31</sup>

Kiernan argues that Ker later “unambiguously” dated the *Beowulf* manuscript between 990 and 1040. This overstates Ker’s clarification.<sup>32</sup> In discussing the will of Æthelgifu, Ker notes that there is a lengthy period, from 990 to 1040, of transition and variety in vernacular writing. In this context, he cites both the Ælfric manuscript Cambridge, University Library MS Gg. 3. 28 and the Nowell Codex as instances of “great differences[...]between the hands of scribes writing at the same time and in the same place.”<sup>33</sup> Ker’s uncertainty about the dates of Ælfric manuscripts is discussed by Dumville, who notes that the historical evidence convincing Ker that they were eleventh-century no longer fully holds; their use of Square minuscule thereby no longer proves that the script was used in the eleventh century though this does not, of course, undermine Ker’s readiness to allow historical significance to shape palaeographical judgment when dating a difficult manuscript.<sup>34</sup> Certainly, there is no evidence either that Neil Ker believed Square minuscule to have been used as late as 1040 or that it in fact was. But there is considerable uncertainty about precisely when Square minuscule could no longer be used and I am aware of no certain evidence that English Vernacular minuscule was used before 1000.

The current consensus, then, is that a late tenth-century date for Scribe A’s hand is unlikely in the extreme. As a result, the most important question has become how late in the eleventh century it is possible to conceive of a man writing in Square minuscule.<sup>35</sup> On this basis, Dumville has argued that a palaeographical dating of the Nowell Codex should stand as s. xi<sup>in</sup>, with the clarification that its “centre of gravity” is on the turn of the century and would

31 Cf. Scragg, *Conspectus*, p. xiii: “the dates that I have used are largely determined on palaeographic grounds and are therefore necessarily subjective and relative.”

32 Kiernan, *‘Beowulf’ Manuscript*, pp. xviii–xix and n.7. He makes the same point in ‘The Legacy of Wiglaf’, *The ‘Beowulf’ Reader: Basic Readings*, ed. Peter Baker, Basic Readings in Anglo-Saxon England 1 (London, 2000), 195–218.

33 Neil Ker, ‘The Manuscript’, *The Will of Æthelgifu: A Tenth-Century Anglo-Saxon Manuscript*, eds. Dorothy Whitelock with Neil Ker and Lord Rennell (Oxford, 1968), 45–48, at pp. 45–46.

34 Kiernan made a strong argument for the date and script of the manuscript in his paper ‘N.R. Ker’s Dating of Late Square Anglo-Saxon Minuscule in the Reign of Cnut’, at ‘Æthelred II and Cnut the Great: A Millennial Conference to Commemorate the Siege of London in 1016’, 6–9 July 2016.

35 I am largely summarising Dumville’s argument here, from ‘*Beowulf* Come Lately’, esp. pp. 55–58. His discussion of Ker and the Ælfric manuscripts, including Cambridge, University Library MS Gg. 3. 28 is at pp. 58–61.

embrace the period from 987 to 1013. 1013 has been taken by most subsequent readers to be an absolute boundary, resulting in attempts to read *Beowulf* in the context of Æthelred's reign and an absolute conviction of the impossibility of the copying taking place during Cnut's.<sup>36</sup> However, Dumville's first date is somewhat arbitrarily and purely historically selected as the midpoint of Æthelred's reign (which happens to coincide with the last Square minuscule charter); the second, selected to make 1000 the mid-point, is therefore also at least a little arbitrary.<sup>37</sup> 987 would be almost unbelievably early for Scribe A to write the script that he does: this case makes the full development of English Vernacular minuscule ten to fifteen years earlier than any scholars would currently have it, thus doing similar violence to the date of Scribe A's hand as Kiernan is accused of doing to Scribe B's. We know little about the acquisition of scripts, but it is worth remembering that Scribe A seems to have only learned this one script for writing vernacular texts. From the time he entered a scriptorium, then, the only taught vernacular script was the new minuscule form.<sup>38</sup> Whether regarded as an impressive achievement or not, the Nowell Codex is a sustained and demanding project. So Scribe A has both been taught the new script and had time to become relatively confident in its use before working on this book. Proposing 987 for his hand does rather more violence to our knowledge of the development of English Vernacular minuscule than a suggestion of 1016 does to our knowledge of Square minuscule.

It is, of course, the case that charters and chronicles are produced to high standards. Simon Keynes argues strongly for the existence of a royal writing office, one that led innovations in handwriting and propagated new styles through producing such documents.<sup>39</sup> This implies a system in which new scripts spread from the centre, led by a relatively small team. Stokes has followed previous analyses in identifying the remarkably significant role that

36 See for instance Doane, 'Scribal Performance', p. 65; Leneghan, 'Ker's Dates', pp. 7–8; Neidorf, 'Scribal Errors of Proper Names', p. 251.

37 Dumville, '*Beowulf* Come Lately', p. 63. I am aware that I am conducting as detailed an analysis of Dumville's phrasing and argument as I have critiqued others for performing on Ker's.

38 Michael Gullick includes some speculation on the training of young scribes and implications for dating in 'How Fast Did Scribes Write? Evidence from Romanesque Manuscripts', *The History of the Book in the West: 400AD–1455 Volume 1*, eds. Jane Roberts and Pamela Robinson (Farnham, 2010), 227–246, first published in *Making the Medieval Book: Techniques of Production*, ed. Linda L. Brownrigg (Los Altos Hills, CA, 1995), 39–58, at p. 231.

39 Simon Keynes, 'Royal Government and the Written Word in Late Anglo-Saxon England', *Uses of Literacy*, ed. McKitterick (1990), 226–257; cf. Dumville, 'Mid-Century Phases', esp. pp. 156–164.

seems to have been played by a single man, Eadwig Basan, in propagating and defining the new scribal style in the first half of the eleventh century.<sup>40</sup> The adoption of a new script would then depend on exposure combined with political inclination and capacity to adapt to and develop new aesthetics at both an institutional and an individual level. Different scripts were also applied to specific text-types in the period: that Scribe B uses Square minuscule for *Beowulf* and *Judith* does not mean that he could not write in another script. As Ganz argues, “scribes not scripts are at the heart of this story”: a whole range of contextual factors were at play when scribes formed their letters which we cannot now recover and which are obscured when we seek to firmly categorise styles and scribal features.<sup>41</sup> When we speak of ‘the spread of a new script’, the evidence does not allow us to consider anything beyond a handful of individuals working at the same time in specific places and on specific projects, in contexts of production and reception which are still very poorly understood.

In direct relation to this restricted number of instances and individuals, Dumville notes in his discussion of English Caroline minuscule (the script widely used in eleventh-century England for Latin texts) that the speed of adaptation of new scripts varied from place to place. In mid-eleventh-century Worcester, for instance, his Anglo-Caroline Style IV was significantly slower in being taken up than in other major centres and “we have reason to speak of a number of separate English receptions[...]of Caroline script”.<sup>42</sup> Due to either cultural reluctance or lack of expertise, northern England adopted Anglo-Caroline script much later than the Wessex heartland.<sup>43</sup> The initial shift to Anglo-Caroline for Latin texts may have been accompanied by a concomitant shift from Square to English Vernacular minuscule, but the latter is much less well documented and has to be largely assumed.<sup>44</sup> It seems reasonable to assume that, like their mid-century counterparts, scribes working outside the major West-Saxon centres in the early eleventh century were either reluctant to adopt a new script for vernacular texts, or struggled to do so.

40 Dumville, *English Caroline*, pp. 111–140; Stokes, *English Vernacular minuscule*, pp. 60 & 197–198; cf. D.N. Dumville, ‘On the Dating of Some Late Anglo-Saxon Liturgical Manuscripts’, *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society* 10 (1991), 40–57. Richard Gameson provides a restrained judgement, ‘The Colophon of the Eadwig Gospels’, *ASE* 31 (2002), 201–222, esp. pp. 206–207.

41 ‘Latin Script in England’, p. 190; cf also his discussion of Dumville, dating, and scribal practice, pp. 189–192.

42 Dumville, *English Caroline*, p. 145; Worcester’s slow adaptation is discussed pp. 136–137.

43 Dumville, *English Caroline*, p. 156.

44 Dumville, ‘*Beowulf* Come Lately’, p. 54. That the adoption of English Vernacular minuscule occurred at the same time as that of Anglo-Caroline is almost explicitly assumed here.

Further, Dumville's discussion of the hands in *Beowulf* is now over a quarter of a century old, and more recent palaeography (including his own work) has moved towards a perception of more subtle, less centrally determined, shifts in handwriting.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, Stokes is constantly sensitive to the possibility of flexible boundaries and individuals who are transgressive either by their innovation or retardation: he notes that "scribes were human beings, not machines, and so they did not always follow the 'rules' rigorously – or at least, not the rules as constructed by modern palaeographers".<sup>46</sup> These human narratives matter, as Heslop also notes, explicitly taking issue with Dumville's attempt to establish rigid dating boundaries:

while we may argue that scribes were taught to write in a certain way in the 960s and 970s, it cannot be a matter of proven fact that nobody was still writing that way fifty or sixty years later.<sup>47</sup>

Ælfric Bata's *Colloquia* shows us that the work of an old scribe could be admired, and the impact of his teaching still seen, well into his old age and after his death.<sup>48</sup> Ælfric of Eynsham used Square minuscule in the last few years of the tenth century and no-one, surely, would expect him to start writing differently had he happened to annotate another copy of his work ten or fifteen years later.<sup>49</sup> As a named and dateable individual, Ælfric perhaps clarifies Conner's observation that scripts are "a component of scribal *habitus*" and did not simply change at centrally specified moments in time.<sup>50</sup> Or a scribe may choose to use an older script for other reasons: there are numerous instances

45 See e.g. Ganz, 'Editorial Palaeography'; Leslie Lockett, 'An Integrated Re-Examination of the Dating of Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 11', *ASE* 31 (2002), 141–173, p. 142 and especially on this point n. 78 pp. 157–158; Peter Stokes, 'Computer-Aided Palaeography, Present and Future', *Kodikologie und Paläographie im digitalen Zeitalter – Codicology and Palaeography in the Digital Age*, eds. Malte Rehbein, Patrick Sahle, and Torsten Schaßen, with Bernhard Assmann, Franz Fischer and Christiane Fritze, Schriften des Instituts für Dokumentologie und Editorik 2 (Norderstedt, 2009), 300–338; Erik Kwakkel, 'Classics on Scraps: Classical Manuscripts Made from Parchment Waste', *Manuscripts of the Latin Classics 800–1200*, ed. Erik Kwakkel (Leiden, 2015), 107–129, pp. 110–112.

46 Stokes, *English Vernacular Minuscule*, p. 198.

47 Heslop, 'Review of *English Caroline Script*', pp. 379–380.

48 W.H. Stevenson, ed., *Early Scholastic Colloquies* (Oxford, 1929), pp. 49–50, quoted (not in this context) by Heslop, 'Patronage of King Cnut', pp. 176–177.

49 In London, BL, Royal MS 7. C. xii. Cf. Stokes, *English Vernacular Minuscule*, pp. 80 & 92.

50 Conner, 'Matched Scribal Hands', p. 41.



of scribes archaising their hands, or writing in scripts clearly foreign to them, usually for reasons connected with individual copying contexts.<sup>51</sup>

The central point here is that we simply do not know enough about the production of books to place strict limits on when they were made purely on the basis of their scribal hands. Too many anomalous examples exist in a relatively small body of data to be able to assert anything with such certainty, the selection of scripts for texts was not a simple business of following the fashion, and the only firmly dateable samples we have are not really the same type of production as many of those we are trying to date. Again, this is not to try to demolish Dumville's argument: it is merely to suggest that, given the obvious appeal of placing the manuscript after 1016 as suggested in Chapter 1, 1013 seems an unnecessarily rigid boundary and that it is plausible to imagine a veteran scribe who was a few years behind current aesthetic trends.<sup>52</sup> The Nowell Codex was produced in the eleventh century; how early is impossible to tell with certainty on palaeographical grounds: Ker's boundary of 1025 may now look very late, but is not impossible. I see no palaeographical reason to force the codex before 1016.

The implications of this knotty problem for the centre of production are equally difficult and even less conclusive. Scribe A, writing confidently if imperfectly in English Vernacular minuscule, is more skilful than a young scribe in a minor house might be expected to be. Scribe B, with his Square hand, seems to be working in a rather old-fashioned way, particularly if the date is pushed late. One of the more important comments Dumville makes on the Nowell Codex is given in a footnote. He points out:

[t]hat the scriptorium was alive to modern trends in script is displayed by Scribe A's practice of the new style of Insular minuscule [Stokes' English Vernacular minuscule]. If its needs and/or resources were of a restricted nature, it would have supported few scribes, and the longest-serving member might therefore have practised an older style of script.<sup>53</sup>

He goes on to observe that this magnifies the challenge of identifying a time when both scribes could have functioned. Given that Scribe B wrote the first

51 Crick, 'Sense of the Past'; Conner, 'Matched Scribal Hands', 41–42; M.T. Hussey, 'Scribal *habitus*'.

52 Cf. Claire Donovan, *The Winchester Bible* (London, 1993), p. 18, who suggests that "old fashioned characteristics[...]might be expected of the head of the scriptorium, trained in the traditions of some years before."

53 'Beowulf Come Lately', n. 34 p. 55. This is only part of the footnote.

texts in the manuscript, and completed its last text; given, too, that he corrected Scribe A's work on *Beowulf*, he probably took the senior position in the production process. A scriptorium (or secular household) where one scribe was practising, with confidence if not aesthetic perfection, a new script, but where another was scratching his way in an older style, is likely to have been neither very late nor very early, neither very strong nor very poor. As implied by the foregoing discussion, it is unlikely to have been in a major Wessex scriptorium unless it is placed very early in the period. The scribes' hands by themselves may tell us less than the project itself, which as I argue below was a demanding and ambitious one.

It is worth briefly reviewing some characteristic features of the codex in the context of known scriptoria. On the whole, the significant (almost overwhelming) number of unknowns means that it is not possible to rule out any particular centre, but more and less plausible suggestions can be made. Clear scribal house styles are relatively rare and likely usually lasted only for short periods of intense production by the same group of scribes.<sup>54</sup> Bishops and other significant figures often took personnel – and therefore practices – with them;<sup>55</sup> it is possible that the war-torn period of the early eleventh century saw an increase in this circulation. However, some connections can be made. As noted throughout Chapter 3, it is possible to draw a number of parallels between the images in *Wonders* and those used in the Old English Hexateuch, which was produced at St Augustine's, Canterbury, perhaps for a lay patron. The illustrations also bear some similarities, in terms of basic figure types and quality of execution, with illustrated manuscripts of Prudentius' *Psychomachia* from southern England.<sup>56</sup> In the decades after the monastic reform, centres such as St Augustine's and Christ Church in Canterbury and (under their influence) Rochester did produce large numbers of manuscripts and this rush to produce did sometimes result in smaller, rougher, lower quality productions often with mis-matched hands. Similarly, newer, or newly re-established, foundations such as Leofric's Exeter or Salisbury later in the century were "scrambling to transcribe a multitude of texts", and this inevitably resulted in variant collaborating hands in extant manuscripts.<sup>57</sup> However, the focus of the productive

54 See Parkes, *Hands Before Our Eyes*, pp. 8–11, whom I broadly follow here.

55 Crick, 'English Vernacular Script', p. 185; cf. Gameson, 'Book Decoration', p. 283; Stokes, *English Vernacular Minuscule*, pp. 65–68 on the movement of manuscripts.

56 Such as London, BL, Cotton MS Cleopatra C. viii, fols. 4–37 (Canterbury Christ Church); Cambridge, CCC MS 23, fols. 1–104 (southern England); London, BL, Additional MS 24199, fols. 2–38 (Bury?).

57 Gameson, 'Material Fabric', p. 18; on Salisbury in particular, see Teresa Webber, *Scribes and Scholars at Salisbury Cathedral c. 1075–1125* (Oxford, 1992), e.g. pp. 8–21; 143–157.

energy at all of these centres was directed towards volumes essential for the life of the community: while the quality of the Nowell Codex might fit this context, its contents do not. However, if made for a lay patron, the possibility of southern production remains in play. Perhaps more compelling, as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, *Wonders* was both known in a different form in Canterbury, and regarded as a scientific text there. Nothing about either scribal hand connects the volume with the south of England (excluding London). So, while it remains possible that it was produced in Wessex or Kent, there are no good reasons to suggest those areas.

Further north, there is so little evidence that it is not possible to assemble a clear picture of vernacular hands in Chester-le-Street and, by the turn of the century, Durham. Script which does survive has little in common with the work in the Nowell Codex. On the other hand, it is clear from Aldred's work in glossing the Lindisfarne Gospels (London, BL, Cotton MS Nero D. iv) and from his supervisory work on Durham A.IV.19 that members of the community had limited Latin in the late tenth century, just as I argue below (in Chapter 4) for Scribe A. Aspects of the cultural approach I find in the work of both scribes in Nowell is similar to that identified by Jolly as promoted by Aldred: an interest in "a kind of conscious archaizing in script, textual contents, and use of the vernacular".<sup>58</sup> The use of an old fashioned hand would, to a degree, fit into this context, as would the experimental combination of texts and relatively low grade production. However, while Aldred's community in late tenth-century Chester-le-Street provides an instance of some of the same cultural ideas I identify in Nowell, there is, again, nothing to suggest that the production of the manuscript should be sited there.

The closest to a positive link between the scribes of the codex and any centre is Stokes' cautious identification of an "extremely weak" connection of Scribe A's hand with other scribal performances attributable to Archbishop Wulfstan's sphere of influence, connecting Worcester, York, and London.<sup>59</sup> This is based on a number of shared letter-forms, including a teardrop *æ*, *d* with the shaft at 45°, open *g*, and a preponderance of straight *y*.<sup>60</sup> To this could

58 Jolly, *Community of St. Cuthbert*, p. 70. I am following Jolly's argument about Aldred closely in this paragraph; see e.g. pp. 59, 65, 73–78.

59 Stokes, *English Vernacular Minuscule*, n. 66 p. 94; cf. pp. 99–102 which discuss Wulfstanian manuscripts. He compares specific letter-forms used by the hands in the Nowell Codex (which he calls by the manuscript shelfmark, Vitellius A. xv, using BL foliation) in Table 8, p. 95, alongside hands from Trinity R. 5. 22 (717); London, BL, Harley MS Ch. 43. C. 4; London, BL, Additional MS 47967; and Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, lat. MS 7585.

60 Compare Stokes' Tables 8 and 9 and surrounding discussion, *English Vernacular Minuscule*, pp. 95 & 103.

be added the variety of scripts practised at Worcester under Wulfstan: on this basis, along with some more specific scribal features, Scheide 71 and Julius A. x are both also (very cautiously) connected with Wulfstan by Stokes.<sup>61</sup> The evidence is far from strong enough to build any certainty: there are at least some features common to the small number of known Wulfstanian scribes (such as the use of low s) that Nowell Scribe A does not display.

Wulfstan was officially at London in 992–1002, Worcester in 1002–16 and York in 1002–23, and it is conceivable that he carried some elements of scriptorium practice (or indeed some individual scribes) with him from London. Sisam, followed by Eric Stanley and given cautious support by Stokes, proposes that city as a point of origin for the codex, but if it were produced after 1002, when Wulfstan left London, there is no reason not to associate it, again extremely cautiously, with Worcester or York.<sup>62</sup> This is not, of course, an identification: merely one of many possibilities which has, perhaps, the most to recommend it. The archbishop's interest in vernacular books is well-known – though this latter point may well be simply due to the greater ease with which vernacular books can be associated with him, given the frequency with which he annotates.<sup>63</sup> His interest in constructing a 'Holy Society' based partly on bringing lay culture closer to the Church has also been highlighted, and this is arguably part of the process taking place when heroic texts are drawn into the same matrix as hagiography, as suggested in Chapter 1.<sup>64</sup> There is, though, very little evidence that the archbishop might have tolerated texts as open to variant interpretations as *Beowulf*, *Alexander*, and *Wonders*. There is certainly no other evidence that Wulfstan was directly engaged with secular culture to this degree: it is more likely that the project and scribes of the Nowell Codex can be attributed to his sphere of influence than tied to him more closely. Production

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- 61 As has been widely discussed, the problematic tendency is that those few centres that can have specific manuscripts assigned to them with confidence thereby attract more and more attributions, building up a somewhat artificial notion of a house style and excluding attributions to the many other centres of scribal production we know existed; see e.g. Gameson, 'Book Production at Worcester', p. 228; Julia Crick, 'The Art of Writing: Scripts and Scribal Production', *The Cambridge History of Early Medieval English Literature*, ed. Clare A. Lees (Cambridge, 2012), 50–72, at pp. 70–71; Stokes, *English Vernacular Minuscule*, at e.g. p. 105; cf. William Noel, *The Harley Psalter*, Cambridge Studies in Codicology and Palaeography 4 (Cambridge, 1995), p. 148 on the similar problem of artistic house style.
- 62 Sisam, 'Compilation', p. 95; Eric G. Stanley, 'The Date of *Beowulf*: Some Doubts and No Conclusions', *Dating*, ed. Chase (1997), 197–211, p. 211.
- 63 Stokes, *English Vernacular Minuscule*, p. 100.
- 64 Patrick Wormald, 'Archbishop Wulfstan and the Holiness of Society', *Anglo-Saxon History: Basic Readings*, ed. David Pelteret, Basic Readings in Anglo-Saxon England 6, Garland Reference Library of the Humanities 2108 (New York, 2000), 191–224, e.g. pp. 206–207.

for a lay patron at a centre under Wulfstan's auspices is a plausible, though far from airtight, reading of the manuscript we have. We may turn briefly to other sources of information about the origin of the book, to see if further trails lead in the same direction.

The Nowell Codex was most likely bound together with the Southwick Codex by Richard James, Cotton's librarian from 1628 to 1638.<sup>65</sup> The latter volume has its name as this was certainly one of its medieval locations, and Cotton may have acquired it thence. Southwick, in southern Hampshire, was not founded until c. 1145, when St Mary's Priory was moved from nearby Portchester Castle. The castle itself was not given a priory until 1133; Portchester has no claim as a possible location for the production of the Nowell Codex. There is no evidence that Cotton's library was organised on the basis of provenance and there is nothing else that connects the Nowell Codex with Southwick or the surrounding area.

The Codex is first known through Laurence Nowell, who was Dean of Lichfield, with other pluralities ranging from Chichester to York.<sup>66</sup> He has in the past been confused with Laurence Nowell the antiquary, but is now clearly understood as a different man who, unlike both his namesake and Robert Cotton, did not collect manuscripts from all over the country.<sup>67</sup> Nowell became Dean of Lichfield in 1560, but did not take up a post at York until 1566, three years after he signed the first page of the codex; his association with the manuscript moves it towards Mercia, and Lichfield in particular.<sup>68</sup> A twelfth-century Worcester manuscript refers to the same section of *Wonders* that attracted the attention of Nowell's producers and a later doodler, as I argue below.<sup>69</sup> *Beowulf* has well-established Mercian connections, the most widely accepted of which is the 'Offa digression', poetic lines 1932–62.<sup>70</sup> Offa made Lichfield an archbishopric in 786, and he seems to have had a close relationship with the

65 Malone, *Nowell Codex*, p. 11; Kiernan, 'Beowulf' Manuscript, p. 7.

66 Kiernan, 'Reformed Codex'; Sisam, 'Beowulf' Manuscript, n. 3 p. 62.

67 Retha M. Warnicke, 'Nowell, Laurence (c.1516–1576), found in Nowell, Laurence (1530–c.1570), antiquary', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004–13), referred to and discussed in this context by Kiernan, 'Reformed Nowell Codex', n.7.

68 Kiernan suggests that the codex was produced in or near Lichfield by "episcopal scribes", 'Reformed Nowell Codex'; significant parts of this discussion are indebted to his.

69 Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hatton MS 115 (5135), fols. 148–155, as discussed by László Sándor Chardonnens, 'Do Anglo-Saxons Dream of Exotic Sheep?', *Representing Beasts in Early Medieval England and Scandinavia*, eds. Michael D.J. Bintley and Thomas J.T. Williams, Anglo-Saxon Studies 29 (Woodbridge, 2015), 131–150, pp. 141–144; Chapter 3 below.

70 Most recently discussed by Francis Leneghan, 'The Poetic Purpose of the Offa Digression in *Beowulf*', *RES* n.s. 60 (2009), 538–560. See also North, *Origins of 'Beowulf'*, esp. pp. 225–254.

see.<sup>71</sup> The most recent analysis of the poem's linguistic forms concurs with the longstanding view that the poem is most likely to have originated in Anglia, probably in Mercia.<sup>72</sup> The only known line of *Beowulf* outside the Nowell Codex comes from further north: a late tenth-century inscription in a continental manuscript which was in York by that date.<sup>73</sup>

Each strand of evidence is terribly slight, but collectively the scribal performance, the history of the codex, the history of its longest text, and slight indications of engagement with its texts come from Wulfstan's sphere of influence, centred on Mercia but with some presence in York. Given what I am proposing as the late date of Scribe B's hand, and the lack of a clear relationship with Wulfstanian manuscripts (though see my discussion of the *f*-shaped sign they have in common in Appendix 4), it is not likely that the Nowell Codex was produced directly under him. Without claiming it as probable – merely as the most reasonable guess given the direction indicated by minimal evidence of variant types – I would place the production of the codex in Lichfield somewhere between 1000 and 1020.<sup>74</sup> On the same literary-historical grounds as Kiernan, I would incline towards the end of this period, 1016–1020, but without any degree of certainty.

This discussion has not moved the situation on very far. The Nowell Codex was produced in a place aware of current trends, but not bound by them. It was produced with care, but far from the immensely high, up-to-the-minute,

71 The archbishopric was dissolved in 803, but barely functioned after Offa's death in 796. See C.J. Godfrey, 'The Archbishopric of Lichfield', *Studies in Church History 1: Papers Read at the First Winter and Summer Meetings of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, eds. C.W. Dugmore and Charles Duggan (London, 1964), 145–153.

72 Fulk *et al.*, *Klaeber's 'Beowulf'*, pp. clvii–clviii.

73 Andy Orchard, 'The Word Made Flesh: Christianity and Oral Culture in Anglo-Saxon Verse', *Oral Tradition* 24 (2009), 293–318; Parkes, 'Rædan, areccan, smeagan', p. 19; Ker, *Catalogue*, §229, p. 304. The annotation is in London, BL, Harley MS 208, on fol. 88r, in the lower margin of a letter from Alcuin, and can be seen on *Digitised Manuscripts*. The letter is §249 in Alcuin, *Epistolae*, ed. E. Dümmler, MGH Epist. IV (Berlin, 1895), pp. 401–404; translated Stephen Allott, *Alcuin of York c. A.D. 732 to 804: His Life and Letters* (York, 1974), §116, pp. 123–126.

74 Though note that Scribe A's hand has almost nothing in common with Stokes' description of the only hand certainly attributable to Lichfield in the period, in Lichfield, Cathedral Library MS 1, *English Vernacular Minuscule*, p. 97. Up to five hands write drypoint glosses in Lichfield 1, perhaps in the eleventh century, discussed in detail by Gifford Charles-Edwards and Helen McKee in 'Lost Voices from Anglo-Saxon Lichfield', *ASE* 37 (2008), 79–89, esp. pp. 84–85 on dating. I have not seen this manuscript.

standards of a fine gospel book or royal charter.<sup>75</sup> It brings divergent texts together in a manner certainly planned, but not readily comprehensible. It was worked on by two scribes, one of whom had been trained in the newest vernacular script, the other still using one which had been outdated for some time. The subsequent sections of this chapter will discuss more fully what actions they seem to have taken and in what sequence, as part of this study's aim of arguing for the Nowell Codex as a complex and communal production.

### Extant Gatherings

All traces of boards, covering, sewing stations and threads were burnt away in the 1731 fire, and different arguments have been made about the original disposition of the pages of the book. This matters because the organisation of gatherings can indicate whether the codex was initially designed as a unified whole, or whether originally separate units have been brought together at some stage after they were first produced. It is probable that, in all but the largest scriptoria, scribes were responsible for their own rulings and possibly even for deciding how to organise gatherings themselves; this becomes more likely when either rulings or organisation varies between scribes or across a project, as it does here.<sup>76</sup> Attempts have been made to use the evidence of ruling patterns to identify which groups of sheets were ruled at the same time, and were therefore part of the same gathering. But the fire, along with subsequent use of water and preservative agents have warped pages to a degree that makes it impossible to demonstrate significant variation. Kiernan and Richard Clement, who have studied the pages to that end, have come up with differing results, in each case supporting their own previously held hypotheses; perhaps more significantly, neither Lucas nor Ford could replicate Kiernan's findings.<sup>77</sup> Kiernan finds that *Judith* is ruled differently from the rest, indicating that it may have been a separate project. Clement's measurements find no significant discrepancy. It should be noted that numerical analyses which compare

75 But cf. Sisam's observation that, according to Asser, King Alfred "was content to read in manuscripts that had no calligraphic elegance", *The Publication of Alfred's Pastoral Care*, *Studies*, ed. Sisam (1953), 140–147, at p. 141.

76 Gameson, 'The Material Fabric of Early British books', *History of the Book*, ed. Gameson (2012), 13–93, p. 67, and his discussion of ruling procedures, pp. 62–70; cf. Gobbitt, 'Lombard Laws', pp. 56–57; Gullick, 'How Fast Did Scribes Write?', pp. 228–229.

77 Kiernan, '*Beowulf*' *Manuscript*, p. 151; Kiernan, 'Reformed Nowell Codex'; Richard Clement, 'Scribal Practice in the *Beowulf* Manuscript', *Library Faculty and Staff Publications* 15 (2010); Lucas, 'Place of *Judith*', n. 21 p. 470; Ford, *Marvels and Artefact*, pp. 54–56.

averages based on radically differing sample sizes are inherently unreliable, if not suspect. The prose texts provide 38 folios of Scribe A's use of line rulings; *Beowulf* provides 87, split between the two scribes; *Judith* just 8. Further, as argued in Chapter 4, treating the prose texts as a single entity does not take account of how they are presented in the manuscript, which seems to regard them as distinct. That leaves one sample of 4.5 pages (*St Christopher*), one of 8.5 (*Wonders*), and one of 25 (*Alexander*), each of which would need to be compared with one another, and with *Judith*'s 8 pages, and with *Beowulf*'s 87 before any reasonable conclusion could be determined about the variation in line ruling and its possible significance.

There are some places where rulings do indicate which pages were part of the same sheet. On 169 (BL172) and 170 (BL 173), for instance, the rulings are particularly distinct, almost cutting through the parchment. They are similarly strong on 163 (BL166) and 164 (BL167). This indicates that gatherings were ruled before the bifolia were folded: this group at least was ruled on the outer sheet of the gathering with rulings imprinted on the inner sheets less clearly. However, this collation is one on which all scholars agree, forming gathering 10 in the codex. Other, more contentious, sites are less clear. I cannot, for instance, identify any relationship between 129 (BL132) and 124 (BL127) or 130 (BL133) and 123 (BL126), which should form the outside bifolia of gathering 5; indeed the two 'halves' of both pairs seem quite dissimilar to me. But my examination was not thorough enough to be certain on this point. It is possible that further work, especially using a combination of the physical book and digital images, may provide clearer evidence, though its potential has to be doubted in a damaged manuscript about whose production we understand so little.<sup>78</sup> For now, then, collation has to be worked out from the arrangement of hair and flesh sides where these can be determined, with the assistance of textual boundaries, scribal treatment, and indications of past arrangements, primarily the different foliations.<sup>79</sup>

For the extant gatherings, three main systems have been proposed by Malone, Kiernan, and Boyle (following Ker, but introducing a new argument); each is laid out in Table 1.<sup>80</sup> All scholars see fourteen gatherings, with the most

78 See also Kiernan, 'Reformed Nowell Codex' for an argument for the value of digital images in this kind of research.

79 On the process and difficulty of identifying hair and flesh sides, see Gerritsen, 'Supplementary', p. 298.

80 Malone, *Nowell Codex*, pp. 15–16; Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, pp. 133–150; Boyle, 'Nowell Codex'; Ker's layout of the gatherings as he saw them, but without supporting argument, is in *Catalogue*, p. 282. The lost gatherings are discussed by Max Förster, *Die*



TABLE 1     *Gathering systems used to describe the Nowell Codex.*

Gathering	Clement ‘types’	Malone sheets	Kiernan sheets	Boyle sheets
[lost]	[?]	[?]	[?]	[?]
1	3	5	5	4
2	2	3	3	4
3	1	4	3 (+2 leaves)	4
4	1	4	3 (+2 leaves)	4
5	2	4	4	4
6	1	4	4 (+2 leaves)	4
7	2	4	4	4
8	1	4	4	4
9	2	4	4	4
10	1	4	4	4
11	1	4	4	4
12	3	5	5	5
13	3	5	5	5
[lost]	-	[?]	[?]	[?]
14	3	4	4	4
[lost]	-	[?]	[?]	[4]

common size being four sheets (eight pages; sixteen sides). Clement has provided the most recent and complete overview of the different collocations, and in the following compressed consideration I follow his conclusions, including, ultimately, Malone’s proposed structure.<sup>81</sup> Kiernan’s system, which he no longer follows, is complicated, and it seems designed to fit the thesis that *Beowulf* was originally a separate codex (in his gatherings 6–13), rather than being

*‘Beowulf’-Handschrift*, *Berichte über die Verhandlungen der sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, philologisch-historische Klasse*, 71/4 (Leipzig, 1919), p. 88. He sees three gatherings of 4 sheets each lost after *Beowulf* and is followed by Malone and Lucas, ‘Place of *Judith*’, p. 465; Boyle, ‘Nowell Codex’, sees one gathering of five sheets (twenty pages) lost at the start. See Ford, *Marvels and Artefact*, pp. 48–56 for another review of the evidence leading to the same conclusion, and a table, p. 50, summarising Förster’s, Dobbie’s, Ker’s, Malone’s, and Kiernan’s views more fully than I do here.

81 See also Lucas, ‘Place of *Judith*’, p. 467; Gerritsen, ‘Supplementary Description’, p. 298; Ker, *Catalogue*, p. 282; Malone, *Nowell Codex*, pp. 15–16.

based on a dispassionate reading of the evidence.<sup>82</sup> To this end, his ‘*Beowulf* Codex’ becomes entirely regular at the cost of the gatherings containing the prose pieces, which become almost random in their variance. This would suggest that Scribe A was putting the prose texts together from disparate scraps and that neither he nor his scriptorium had any preference for systematic gatherings, but that such a preference suddenly emerged when work began on *Beowulf*. More recently, Kiernan has argued that the high-resolution images available through digitisation enable the unambiguous identification of hair and flesh sides on some of the sheets. He proposes a new arrangement of the first ten sides, broken into two three-sheet gatherings, the first of which has had two pages cut away.<sup>83</sup> I have not been able to replicate his findings, and this structure creates difficulties in terms of the length of *St Christopher*, which he attempts to deal with not entirely successfully. I do not consider either of his collations further here.

Boyle’s system differs from Malone’s only in that he sees the first gathering consisting of four sheets rather than five, and the second one of four rather than three. He says this is “palpably” the case, though the only evidence he cites is the catchword at the foot of 98(100) (BL101)v, Figure 4, as indicative of a new gathering starting from 99(95) (BL102)r. This makes Scribe A’s gatherings more uniformly regular: they all become four sheets. But it produces a difficult sequence of hair and flesh sides requiring several individual sheets to have been inserted, where Malone’s system produces a regular first gathering with all sheets folded hair side out. As shown in Figure 4, there can be no doubt that the catchwords are post-medieval: Boyle himself acknowledges that they are “late”. Kiernan sees them as nineteenth century, inserted after the 1731 fire had destroyed the original binding as part of the effort to put the manuscript back together; Pulsiano thought the hand to be Nowell’s; Malone and Lucas, and probably Ker, all saw it as a later addition without attributing it to an

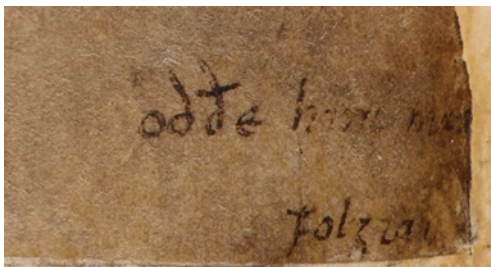


FIGURE 4  
Catchwords at the foot of 98(100)  
(BL101)v.

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COTTON VITELLIUS A. XV.

82 Kiernan now sees it as “a unified codex, minus *Judith*”, pers. corr. 22/1/14.

83 ‘Reformed Nowell Codex’.

individual.<sup>84</sup> There is another catchword in the same (or a very similar) hand on 92(94) (BL95)v, and no-one has suggested that the first two folios of the extant manuscript were originally part of another gathering. The catchwords were almost certainly inserted after the fire caused the pages to be separated and a librarian sought to keep them in order. There is no evidence that they relate to the Anglo-Saxon disposition of the pages, and I cannot see any reason to adduce the more complex hair-flesh arrangement that this would require.

This does mean that what is now the second gathering, with the end of *Wonders* and the start of *Alexander*, is shorter than the others: just 3 sheets making 6 folios rather than a 'normal' 4 sheets and 8 folios. If *Wonders* were copied from a text like that in Tiberius, bilingual and in two columns, it would have been difficult to estimate the amount of space needed; the difficulty may have been exacerbated when it was copied across two gatherings. If my proposal is accepted, of new images drawn from two exemplars and the draughtsmen's imagination, this would intensify the challenge still further.<sup>85</sup> Lucas suggests that the compiler, unsure of how much space was needed for *Wonders*, permitted the use of the end of gathering 1 and then a full gathering, but, as it turned out, that amount of space was not needed, and the quire was shortened from four to three sheets.<sup>86</sup> Presumably it had already been ruled for image space or otherwise spoiled; if unruled, it may have been reused in one of the subsequent gatherings of *Alexander* or *Beowulf*. Speculative as it is, this case seems plausible. Or there may have been some other, irrecoverable, reason for the removal of the sheet. Boyle needs the gathering to be regular as that would support his argument that *Wonders* took up more space than anticipated. However, this reasoning cannot stand, given that it does not fit with the codicological evidence as viewed by Malone, Kiernan, or Clement; nor does it fit with Scribe A's behaviour towards the end of *Wonders* and at the start of *Alexander*.<sup>87</sup>

Four gatherings – 1, 12, 13, and 14 – are relatively straightforward and in the standard Insular pattern, corresponding to Clement's Type 3.<sup>88</sup> All are made of five sheets (ten folios; twenty sides), apart from 14, which was made from four

84 Pulsiano's comments are in his unpublished notes on the manuscript, shared with me by Joe McGowan. Lucas' discussion of the catchword is 'Place of *Judith*', pp. 466–467; he attributes it to the early seventeenth-century "rationalizer" who re-copied the last few lines of *Judith*, p. 472; cf. Gerritsen, 'Supplementary', p. 297.

85 See S.C. Thomson, 'The Two Artists of the Nowell Codex', *SELIM: Journal of the Spanish Society for Medieval English Language and Literature* 21 (2015–16), 105–154, and Chapter 3 below.

86 Lucas, 'Place of *Judith*', pp. 475–476.

87 Discussed further in Chapter 4.

88 See Clement, 'Scribal Practice'. I follow his discussion closely here.

sheets. Clement suggests that it may originally have been a five-sheet gathering, with the outer sheet containing the end of *Judith* and some more of the poem at the start. This is convenient because it would make all of Scribe B's gatherings identical, but it is not in keeping with the historical evidence for the loss of the end of *Judith*: gathering 14 is most likely complete as it now stands. This keeps Scribe B's gatherings consistent in production approach, but assumes that he could have used four sheets for *Judith* and five elsewhere. *Judith* did not originally come after *Beowulf* but much earlier in the codex; this makes it less surprising that 14 was made differently from 12 and 13, a fact that some readings have felt the need to justify.

All other gatherings are 4-sheet bundles, apart from the second, which probably had a sheet removed at some point. However, they were made in different ways. Clement's Type 1 (gatherings 3, 4, 6, 8, 10, and 11) had the flesh side facing inwards, where Type 2 (gatherings 2, 5, 7, and 9) had hair inside. All of the Type 1 gatherings were initially made from three sheets, with either a fourth inserted or two singletons added, where Type 2 were four-sheet gatherings, from which one (gathering 2) had a sheet removed. This variation, and particularly the need to source extra bifolia or singletons for the frequent Type 1 gatherings, may be indicative of a scriptorium with relatively limited resources, making do with what it had.<sup>89</sup> But so much is unclear that it is hardly safe to securely draw this conclusion.

The variant methods of making the gatherings demonstrates little that was not already known. It implies that the scriptorium did not impose a set style, but there is little evidence that many did. It indicates that all of the texts were part of the original design. And it implies that some adjustments were made in the process of production, such as changing the size of gathering 2. Chapter 3 will return to the significance of the structure of this second gathering, but the next difficulty to address here is what the missing gatherings may have looked like, a question bound together with the placement of *Judith*.

### *Judith, St Christopher and the Missing Gatherings*

The openings of both *Judith* and *St Christopher* are missing. The final lines of *Judith* were originally on another folio, and were copied on to the last side of the extant codex by an Elizabethan hand. Clearly, then, some pages from the original compilation are missing. With the same degree of uncertainty as has to be expressed about the disposition of gatherings, I suggest that the

89 Cf. Gameson, 'Material Fabric', pp. 16–18 & 41.

eleventh-century form of the Nowell Codex had a lost religious poem, followed by *Judith*, followed by another religious text in either prose or poetry, followed by a full *St Christopher*, and then the texts as we have them now: *Wonders*, *Alexander*, and *Beowulf*. This proposition is built on a sequence of other arguments, mostly uncontroversial, which lead to their own probable albeit unprovable conclusions. These proceed as follows. First, *Judith* was an integral part of the compilation and originally came before *St Christopher*. Second, *Judith* was preceded by at least one other text, which was likely a religious poem. Third, the end of *Judith* was not copied onto a single sheet and therefore requires a full gathering to be assumed following it. Fourth, *St Christopher* required at least one gathering to complete it. And fifth, based on the way the scribes worked, the end of *Judith* and the start of *St Christopher* most likely did not share a gathering. This discussion concludes by proposing an original sequence of gatherings and contents.

The argument has been made, most strongly by Kiernan following Chambers and Malone, that *Judith* was not part of the original design of the codex.<sup>90</sup> In this reading, it was another work by Scribe B which became detached from its own manuscript context. At some point before Junius made his transcription of *Judith* from the Nowell Codex, a collector, perhaps Nowell, recognised the hand to be identical with that of the end of *Beowulf* and bound them together.<sup>91</sup> This is, of course, possible. But it also seems unnecessarily complex and, as Lucas says, “extremely improbable”.<sup>92</sup> *Judith* is linked linguistically with *St Christopher*; I will argue below that there are palaeographical connections between the texts and it certainly makes a powerful companion piece for *Beowulf* and the rest of the codex. If it were put together with the rest by an Elizabethan collector with a sharp palaeographical eye, it was a serendipitous joining indeed. However, there are plentiful reasons for seeing *Judith* as an integral part of this codex and simpler explanations for its condition and placement than a (relatively) chance combination made at a later date.<sup>93</sup>

It is now broadly accepted that *Judith* preceded *St Christopher*, a case made clearly by Lucas.<sup>94</sup> The last page of *Beowulf* is badly stained, and Scribe B cramps his hand significantly to fit the text into the final side. In itself, this has

90 Kiernan, ‘*Beowulf*’ *Manuscript*, e.g. p. 151; ‘Reformed Nowell Codex’; cf. R.W. Chambers, ‘*Beowulf*’: *An Introduction to the Study of the Poem with a Discussion of the Stories of Offa and Finn* (Cambridge, 1921), p. 555; Malone, *Nowell Codex*, p. 17.

91 Malone suggests “Nowell or some earlier owner”, *Nowell Codex*, p. 17.

92 ‘Place of *Judith*’, p. 468; cf. Boyle, ‘Nowell Codex’, p. 31.

93 See also Gerritsen, ‘Supplementary Description’, p. 302; Clement, ‘Scribal Practice’.

94 Lucas, ‘Place of *Judith*’.

led to suggestions that the Anglo-Saxon codex ended with *Beowulf*, not *Judith*. Further, following ten Brink's suggestion, Sisam identified the unusual orthographic consistency between *Judith* and *St Christopher*: neither contains any instances of medial *-io-*.<sup>95</sup> This matters because, by the eleventh century, there was no longer a distinction between the sounds represented by *-io-* and *-eo-*; *-eo-* had become the usual spelling in what is usually called Late West Saxon. In general, therefore, *-io-* spellings suggest Early West Saxon or Mercian origin or transmission.<sup>96</sup> What is of interest in this context is the wide divergence between the five texts' use of medial *-io-*.<sup>97</sup> While the form appears to differing degrees in each of *Wonders*, *Alexander*, and *Beowulf*, it is entirely absent from *Judith* and *St Christopher*. For Sisam and Lucas, this alone is enough to make it likely that they came from the same exemplar, distinct from that for the other texts. Less certain linguistic tests produce similar results: both, for instance, always use *com(on)* as the preterite of *cuman* where *Alexander* always uses the earlier form *cwom(on)* and *Beowulf* uses both in equal parts.<sup>98</sup> Sisam saw far more uses of *hie* than *hi* in *Alexander* and *Beowulf*, where the two forms are used equally in the religious texts.<sup>99</sup> *Alexander* uses the non-standard or Anglian accusative forms *mec* (for *me*) and *usic* (for *us*) relatively frequently: there are about 30 instances of *mec* and seven of *usic* though a number of these have been 'corrected' by erasure, probably by Scribe A. Genitive plurals using terminal *o* occur regularly in the text, and also recur in Scribe A's part of *Beowulf*.<sup>100</sup> Also of interest is the regular use of *cýningc* in *St Christopher* and frequent *kýning* in *Alexander*. All of these features place *Alexander* in contrast to *St Christopher* and *Judith*. They also broadly align *Alexander* with *Beowulf*, though the latter text – longer, older, poetic – is linguistically more complex and Scribe A seems to have a different attitude towards it than toward the other texts.<sup>101</sup> Sisam was convinced that *St Christopher* and *Alexander* did not share a source, and fairly certain that *Wonders* was from a different exemplar again.<sup>102</sup>

95 Lucas, 'Place of *Judith*', p. 473; Kiernan, '*Beowulf* Manuscript'; ten Brink, '*Beowulf*', pp. 238–241.

96 Cf. Lucas, 'Place of *Judith*', pp. 473–474; Sisam, 'Compilation', pp. 67–68; Rypins, *Prose Texts*, pp. xiv–xv.

97 This is discussed in Chapter 1 with regard to the exemplar of *Beowulf*; orthographic variance between the scribes is considered further in Chapters 4 and 5.

98 See Sisam, 'Compilation'. There are no instances of preterite *cuman* in *Wonders*.

99 'Compilation', pp. 90–91.

100 Sisam, 'Compilation', p. 94; Sisam, '*Beowulf* Manuscript', p. 64; Rypins, *Prose Texts*; Orchard, *Companion*, p. 35.

101 As discussed in Chapter 4.

102 'Compilation', pp. 69 & 83.

There are, then, very close connections between *St Christopher* and *Judith* and no good reason to see the two of them as either coming from separate exemplars, or being produced as separate projects. They seem to have come from a single source with much more recent linguistic forms than those in the *Beowulf* exemplar and both scribes seem to have made minor efforts to echo their exemplars. The high probability that the last page of *Beowulf* was for a long time the last page of the book, and the inseparability of the other prose texts, which each end within the same gathering as the following piece, means that if it was not originally at the end, then *Judith* must have come before *St Christopher* when the Nowell Codex was made.

Given that the later reader who copied the end of *Judith* had at least enough sympathy to record its final lines, imitating Anglo-Saxon letter-forms no less, it is significant that there is no record of what preceded the extant text: those lines must have been lost by the time it came into this collector's possession, making Clement's scenario unlikely.<sup>103</sup> As we have it by its own numeration, the poem starts towards the end of a fitt ix: there might be approximately eight and a half sections missing.<sup>104</sup> Not all of these fitts need to have been parts of *Judith*, however: Junius 11 shows that fitt numbers could be written in sequence through different poems. Although she has not always been followed, Rosemary Woolf convincingly demonstrated long ago that the poem as it stands is aesthetically strong, and that it need not have been much longer.<sup>105</sup> The extant full fitts in *Judith* each lasts between five and six sides; those copied by Scribe B in *Beowulf* range between two and five sides, with the median at the higher end, around four. So we could expect (very roughly) anywhere between 17 and 50 pages to have originally preceded *Judith* in the Nowell Codex: at least one gathering, but more likely two or three, are missing.<sup>106</sup> Following Woolf, these probably contained the opening of *Judith* with another text preceding that. Given that this text shared fitt numeration with ours, it was probably a poem.

103 See Kiernan's convincing discussion of this reader's motivations, 'Reformed Nowell Codex'.

104 This assumes that the sectional numbers were accurate, and were not blindly copied from an exemplar which contained a longer *Judith* or additional texts not carried over into the Nowell Codex.

105 'Lost Opening'; as discussed by Lucas, 'Place of *Judith*', n.14 pp. 465–466; cf. A.S. Cook's view that "the poem seems virtually complete" in his *Judith* (Lexington, 1904), note to line 1b. Taylor and Salus argue for a long *Judith*, 'Compilation', p. 203.

106 i.e. the number of pages ranges from 8.5 x 2 up to 8.5 x 6; the number of gatherings thus ranges from one gathering of 20 leaves (like Scribe B's when he copies *Beowulf*) up to three gatherings with 16 leaves each (like Scribe B's when he copies *Judith*).

Given the relationship with *Judith*, which itself has a close relationship with *St Christopher*, it is probable that this lost poem had a religious theme.

*Judith* would have been comfortably completed on one side: Lucas suggests that eight manuscript lines contained the six hypermetric poetic lines.<sup>107</sup> Dobbie proposed that this could have been a half-sheet added on to the end of the gathering. This is possible, but not likely: singletons were added to gatherings in Anglo-Saxon books, but usually in the middle of gatherings, not at the ends where they were likely to get lost.<sup>108</sup> Clement suggests that the *Judith* gathering (now the 14th) could originally have been a gathering of 5 sheets, the same as those used by Scribe B in *Beowulf*.<sup>109</sup> This would mean that the whole outer sheet was lost at some point in its history, which is more plausible than Dobbie's scenario. However, the end of *Judith* was available to the Elizabethan reader who copied it in an approximation of Scribe B's hand at the foot of the final leaf of the extant codex. Clement has to assume that the sixteenth-century reader was interested enough in the poem to copy its conclusion for posterity, but disengaged enough to throw away the other half of the sheet, containing two sides of poetry at the start of the extant text. On balance, it does not seem likely that a sheet has been lost from the outside of the gathering containing *Judith*: Lucas' explanation, which sees it on the first page of a new gathering, is more likely. This gives us at least a half-sheet, or more likely a full gathering, lost after *Judith*, and at least a full gathering lost before it.

The Latin analogues to the Christopher narrative suggest that about the initial two-thirds are missing: with just over eight sides extant, we may assume approximately sixteen missing sides, or one gathering of four sheets, like Scribe A uses for the majority of the prose texts. The first gathering we have of *St Christopher* has five sheets (giving twenty sides); if the missing gathering was identical, he could have completed it with space left over. Lucas suggests that fifteen sides from a gathering of four sheets gives enough space, which would conveniently leave the first side free for Scribe B to complete *Judith*.<sup>110</sup> This would, I think, have forced some compression of the text but is entirely reasonable, though I argue against it below on other grounds. Based on a proposed new collation, Kiernan now suggests that *St Christopher* is nearly complete.<sup>111</sup> As he notes, this would make the part that is missing closer to the *Old English Martyrology*'s summary before becoming more detailed, close to the

107 'Place of *Judith*', p. 470.

108 '*Beowulf*' and '*Judith*', p. xv.

109 'Scribal Practice', p. 4.

110 'Place of *Judith*', p. 472.

111 'Reformed Nowell Codex'.



Latin sources, for the extant section. There are a number of extant *St Christopher* texts and none of them exhibits this pattern of compression followed by expansion; I see no reason to follow this proposal.

If *Judith* was originally at the start of the codex, the page on which it ended could have been the first in the gathering in which *St Christopher* began. As Lucas shows, this is neat, accounting perfectly for missing pages and text together.<sup>112</sup> But it also presents some difficulties. Like Clement's reconstruction, it requires some special pleading for the behaviour of the Elizabethan 'rationalizer', who in Lucas' scheme, copied the end of *Judith*, added it to the end of the book because he connected the hand of *Judith* with that of the end of *Beowulf*, but failed to recognise Scribe A's hand as that of the first two-thirds of *St Christopher*, and threw it away.<sup>113</sup> It also creates a difficult narrative of scribal activity. When Scribe B came to write the end of *Judith*, he was concerned about space: 206 (BL209) is crowded with abbreviations. But he realised that he could not compress enough and entered the last few lines on the first side of a new gathering. This means that the new gathering was not a pre-existing one: Scribe B wanted to complete the text at the end of a gathering but knew that, when he failed to compress *Judith* sufficiently, he could use a new side to complete it. If Scribe A had already left a side free for the end of *Judith*, this compression would have been unnecessary; Scribe B could have continued writing naturally and used more than eight manuscript lines on the side that had been left blank for that purpose. Therefore, if *Judith* was followed by a gathering containing the first two-thirds of *St Christopher*, written by Scribe A, then the latter cannot have started work on *St Christopher* until Scribe B had completed *Judith*. In turn, because they all share gatherings, Scribe A almost certainly wrote his three prose texts and the first two thirds of *Beowulf* in a continuous run. That is, the need for a few lines at the start of a new gathering to complete the copying of *Judith* effectively prevents Scribe A from working on anything at all until Scribe B had completed that text. It is, then, more likely that Scribe B was able to write the final few lines on the first page of a new gathering because he was responsible for all of the text in that gathering. He presumably worked more carefully, possibly even with the mathematical exactitude which Boyle claims for his work on *Beowulf*, to ensure that he completed this extra gathering appropriately.<sup>114</sup> It could then be joined with Scribe A's first gathering of *St Christopher*. This would mean that a minimum

112 Lucas, 'Place of *Judith*', p. 472.

113 Lucas makes the first of these cases, 'Place of *Judith*', p. 472.

114 Boyle, 'Nowell Codex'. I do not agree with his reasoning, discussed below and in Chapter 5.

of two gatherings, rather than one, are lost between what we have of *Judith* and what we have of *St Christopher*. It would also mean that another text is lost between them.<sup>115</sup> Given that they are both religious, the hypothetical connecting text was probably religious, too. It may have been another poem (following in fitts from *Judith*) or prose (before *Christopher*). Either way, this brings the exemplar for this part of Nowell closer to the large collection once represented in Otho B. x, which contained a vernacular *Christopher* homily as §11 and a vernacular text on *Judith* as §19, surrounded by other hagiographies, sermons, and prayers.<sup>116</sup> Otho B. x is the closest analogue, but it is not a precise one. The *Judith* text was not another copy of this poem: Smith's Catalogue records it as "Historia Holofernus & Judithæ, ubi plura de captivitatæ Judæorum; & ad finem, historia Malchi Monachi ex Hieronymo", which closely resembles the contents of the extant version of Ælfric's homily in Cambridge, CCC MS 303. It is, then, futile to speculate further on the texts that may have been lost from the Nowell Codex.<sup>117</sup>

There is nothing certain about this reading of the evidence. Given that we know the scribes were prepared to share a text, it is possible that Scribe B wrote the start of *St Christopher*, handing over to Scribe A at the start of what is now the first gathering of the codex. It is also possible that Scribe A had another project to work on, leaving Scribe B free to use as many gatherings or stray pages as he needed for *Judith* and whatever texts preceded it. But there is no evidence to favour either supposition. On the whole, the supposition that the end of *Judith* and the start of *St Christopher* shared a gathering in the Nowell Codex, though possible, is not the most plausible reading of the evidence: it seems more likely that another text (and another gathering), copied by Scribe B, divided them.

In this scheme, at least three gatherings are missing: one before *Judith*, one after it, and another preceding *St Christopher*. In original sequence, these first five (or more) gatherings probably contained a religious poem, and the full *Judith* (only a little longer than our extant text and with its fitts numbered in sequence after the first text), another religious life in verse or prose, and then the full *St Christopher*. There could, of course, have been more gatherings

115 Cf. Pickles' description of the original disposition as originally "x-quires + *Judith* + x-quires + *Christopher* + *Wonders* + *Alexander* + *Beowulf*", 'Prose Texts', p. 9, as cited and followed by Ford, *Marvels and Artefact*, p. 56.

116 According to Smith's 1696 *Catalogue*, ed. Tite, pp. 70–71.

117 It is, perhaps, worth noting that if there were other hagiographical texts, there are not many that would lend further support to the idea of the Nowell Codex as a 'book of monsters'.

containing other texts of which there is now no trace. As *Judith* and *St Christopher* share linguistic and scribal features despite being copied by different scribes, they probably came from one exemplar: the text before *Judith* and the putative one which followed it would have come from the same manuscript. It looks as though the first half of the Nowell Codex was made up of four or more religious texts in poetry and prose, brought in from the same exemplar. This stands in parallel to Orchard's finding that the translation of *Alexander* was made with reference to *Beowulf*, and that those two texts are therefore likely to have been in the same manuscript from the time of that translation in the tenth century. This gives us two exemplars with rather different texts and from different periods united in this codex.

While the Exeter Book provides a slightly earlier parallel instance of secular and religious texts being brought together, the Nowell Codex's deliberate unification of pagan and Christian heroes in the early eleventh century seems a fairly radical move. Without any particular justification in his source, Ælfric calls Alexander "se egefulla cyning" ("that terrifying king") and, in a homily on the Maccabees, attributes the growth of evil in the world to his actions.<sup>118</sup> A number of scholars, indeed, have suggested that a large part of Ælfric's project was to replace traditional heroes with saintly ones, and Neidorf has argued that this was the general trend of Anglo-Saxon society from about the tenth century.<sup>119</sup> If we take Ælfric as representative of the position of the Anglo-Saxon church in the early eleventh century, the uniting of hagiography with heroic texts, and particularly of saints with Alexander the Great, is an unusual project.

### Sequence of Production

As the gatherings vary in their construction, it is unlikely that they were all created at the same time; the scribes probably made them themselves as need arose. Despite being constructed by (or for) different scribes, the gatherings now numbered 1, 12, and 13 are all constructed identically and were most likely produced before those now numbered 2–11, because they correspond to the

118 Lee, *Ælfric's Homilies*, 'Maccabees', lines 1–6, quotation from line 1. Orchard suggests that Alexander is presented negatively in the scriptural version, *Pride and Prodigies* pp. 117–118, but by my reading Alexander is there presented without judgement (rather like Scyld Scefing at the start of *Beowulf*), with his son Antiochus commencing the evil in 1:11.

119 See e.g. Hugh Magennis, 'Warrior Saints, Warfare, and the Hagiography of Ælfric of Eynsham', *Traditio* 56 (2001), 27–51, following Dorothy Bethurum, 'The Form of Ælfric's *Lives of the Saints*', *Studies in Philology* 29 (1932), 515–533. Neidorf, 'Germanic Legend'.

'religious exemplar' posited above which started the project. The now lost gatherings are, then, more likely to have followed this five-sheet pattern than to have conformed to Scribe A's most frequent form of a four-sheet gathering. Gathering 14 probably originally preceded gathering 1, and was itself preceded by (at least) about three lost gatherings containing *Judith* and other texts, and followed by two more lost gatherings containing the end of *Judith* and first two-thirds of *St Christopher*. A possible original disposition of gatherings is given in Table 2. As he was only interested in the join between them, and not in what preceded *Judith*, Lucas talks cogently about 'gathering \*o' for the lost gathering joining *Judith* and *St Christopher* (which I make two gatherings). However, this becomes increasingly confusing when fully applied. Present gathering 14 becomes gathering \*-1, with my speculated preceding gatherings becoming \*-2 and so on. In a bid for clarity, then, the subsequent discussion uses the possible original gathering numbers (each preceded by \*), with Malone's numbers in square brackets. These figures are laid out in Table 2.

With this hopefully coherent, if tentative, proposition about the original disposition, it is finally possible to consider the sequence and manner of the scribes' work. In my view, some past analyses have focused too closely on localised issues, without taking the wider picture into account. One example is Boyle's widely accepted judgement that gathering \*17 [11], which includes the handover between the scribes, must have been copied when \*18 [12] was already complete. He observes that Scribe B writes a twenty-first line for four consecutive sides (174 (BL177)v–176 (BL179)r) which had been ruled for twenty lines. He must have done this, Boyle argues, because he had too much text to use just the twenty lines, and this in turn shows \*18 [12] must have already been copied, otherwise he would not have had to worry about space.<sup>120</sup> This implies some unusual circumstances in the handover: that Scribe A was unable to fulfil his expected quota, and that Scribe B was effectively having to come back and finish off the job, either because his junior colleague had proven incompetent or because he had become unavailable. Boyle suggests that Scribe A probably failed to reproduce his exemplar in a disciplined manner, did not follow the plan for how much text to enter into each manuscript line and side, and left too much verse to be copied on too few manuscript sides. However, counting numbers of poetic half-lines written per page is revealing, as shown in Table 3.

At the end of *Beowulf*, where we know that he had a set amount of space for a set amount of text, Scribe B gets himself into an almost impossibly difficult situation. The last three sides he copies include 181 half-lines at 60.33 per side and 2.87 per manuscript line, more than 15 half-lines higher than his

120 Boyle, 'Nowell Codex'. His argument is accepted by e.g. Lucas, 'Place of *Judith*', p. 469.

TABLE 2 *Speculative original gatherings in the Nowell Codex.*

'Original' gathering	Containing / [Assumed to have contained]	Scribe	Present position
* <sub>1</sub>	[Poetic saint's life]	B?	<i>lost</i>
* <sub>2</sub>	[Poetic saint's life]	B?	<i>lost</i>
* <sub>3</sub>	[End of poetic saint's life] and start of <i>Judith</i>	B?	<i>lost</i>
* <sub>4</sub>	<i>Judith</i>	B	14
* <sub>5</sub>	Last lines of <i>Judith</i> [and additional saint's life or biblical / homiletic narrative]	B?	<i>lost</i>
* <sub>6</sub>	[Start of <i>St Christopher</i> ]	A?	<i>lost</i>
* <sub>7</sub>	End of <i>St Christopher</i> and start of <i>Wonders</i>	A	1
* <sub>8</sub>	End of <i>Wonders</i> and start of <i>Alexander</i>	A	2
* <sub>9</sub>	<i>Alexander</i>	A	4
* <sub>10</sub>	<i>Alexander</i>	A	3
* <sub>11</sub>	End of <i>Alexander</i> and start of <i>Beowulf</i>	A	5
* <sub>12</sub>	<i>Beowulf</i>	A	6
* <sub>13</sub>	<i>Beowulf</i>	A	7
* <sub>14</sub>	<i>Beowulf</i>	A	8
* <sub>15</sub>	<i>Beowulf</i>	A	9
* <sub>16</sub>	<i>Beowulf</i>	A	10
* <sub>17</sub>	<i>Beowulf</i>	A, handing over to B on 172 (BL 175)v.4	11
* <sub>18</sub>	<i>Beowulf</i>	B	12
* <sub>19</sub>	<i>Beowulf</i>	B	13

average copying rate earlier in *Beowulf*. He does not rule additional lines at the end of each side, but compresses his hand and uses numerous abbreviations. His behaviour is similar towards the end of *Judith* where he ultimately found the task impossible and had to go on to an extra side. By contrast, in \*<sub>17</sub> [11], he copies at by far his lowest rate – as, in fact, does Scribe A. It makes no sense that two scribes who show themselves to be concerned about space elsewhere exhibit none of the same concerns at this point if the issue were lack of space.

TABLE 3 *Intensity of copying Beowulf by gathering and scribe.*

*Gathering	Scribe	Verses of <i>Beowulf</i>	Average verses per side	Average verses per MS line
*11 [5]	A	182	45.5	2.28
*12 [6]	A	703	43.94	2.2
*13 [7]	A	675	42.19	2.11
*14 [8]	A	716	44.75	2.24
*15 [9]	A	710	44.38	2.22
*16 [10]	A	765	47.81	2.17
*17 [11]	A	125	41.67	2.08
*17 [11]	B	536	41.23	2.03
*18 [12]	B	891	44.55	2.12
*19 [13]	B	1,052	52.6	2.5

The sides where Scribe B adds in the extra lines also see his most intensive use of minor capitals and punctuation, both of which consume space.<sup>121</sup> These can only ever be possible indications of how the scribes were approaching their work, but, given that we know what Scribe B does when pressed for room (as in the last few pages of both *Beowulf* and *Judith*), it seems certain that gathering \*17 [11] was not produced in a rush; nor was it produced under the pressure of needing to fit text in before an already completed gathering \*18 [12] as has previously been assumed. The indications are that gatherings \*17 [11], \*18 [12], and \*19 [13] were produced in that order, though they need not have been, and that there was nothing unusual in the scribal handover.

Scribe A ruled gathering \*16 [10] for 22 lines throughout rather than his normal 20. Such certainty about the amount of text that needs to be included in the gathering makes it look as though gathering \*17 [11] may have been copied before \*16 [10]: it seems that Scribe A knew what he had to do, and did it, particularly given his relaxed attitude to space in \*17 [11]. This may indicate some form of calculations made in advance, along the lines that Boyle proposes as used by Scribe B. Elsewhere, he copied gatherings \*11 [5] – \*15 [9] absolutely consistently, which makes it likely that they were copied consecutively. That is, it is feasible – though far from necessary – that the two scribes collaborated on gathering \*17 [11] first, and then Scribe B continued with his copying of

<sup>121</sup> Discussed further in Chapter 5.

the last three *Beowulf* gatherings (or of *Judith* and its surrounding texts) while A produced the first six. The advantage of this reading is that both scribes always have something to do: there is no need to assume that one took time off to work on another project to allow the other to complete a text at any point. It is possible, as implied by Lucas' reading, that A waited while B copied *Judith*, and then B waited while A copied the prose texts and his part of *Beowulf*, until B took over and Scribe A ended his involvement. The Blickling Homilies provide a parallel instance for one scribe working intensively while the other looks in occasionally to guide or complete work; they do not provide an analogy for each scribe taking long turns on and off the project. If there were more texts before and after *Judith* for Scribe B to work on, and if Scribe A could have started *St Christopher* without waiting for his colleague to complete that initial stint, this issue is solved. That necessitates a controlling intelligence, who could have been one of the scribes or a third party, who divided the work from different exemplars and who made rough assessments of how many sides were required for each text. But it is likely that the creation of the codex was shared more equally than it now appears.

None of this, of course, explains why Scribe B made such a mess of completing the poem in the final gathering. Boyle's attempt to reconstruct the process of calculations undertaken by the scribes is based on the assumption that they were replicating (or attempting to replicate) the exemplar line-by-line. He therefore explains the addition of four lines in gathering \*17 [11] as the result of Scribe B checking how many lines short of the exemplar he was. Quite apart from the difference in this speculated practice from what he can certainly be seen doing at the end of the text, and the absence of evidence that the texts all came from the same exemplar, the ambition of producing a new text by copying an exemplar line-by-line seems broadly unlikely in this kind of project.<sup>122</sup> Within the Nowell Codex, a number of dittographic errors take place with words repeated at the end of one line and the start of another; at least one occurs between the end of one page and the start of another.<sup>123</sup> These errors would not have occurred had scribes been generally replicating their exemplar

122 Compare Crick, 'Sense of the Past', pp. 5–6, who argues for the occasional extremity of reproduction of exemplars; Noel discusses the evidence for Eadui Basan and the rest of the scribal team in that project attempting (and failing) to copy the Utrecht Psalter's layout, *Harley Psalter*, pp. 94–95.

123 91(93) (BL94)v.7 and .8; 109(117) (BL120)r.16 and 17; 148 (BL151)r and v; perhaps 179 (BL182) r and v, on which see Kiernan, 'The *nathwylc* Scribe and the *nathwylc* Text of *Beowulf*, *Poetry, Place, and Gender: Studies in Medieval Culture in Honor of Helen Damico*, ed. Catherine E. Karkov (Kalamazoo, MI, 2009), pp. 98–131, p. 98 and n.3 p. 98.

line by line. There are some dittographic errors where the line below has been copied (at e.g. 147a(131) (BL149)r.6; 147 (BL150)r.14; 152 (BL155)r.14), but these are the exception rather than the rule. Scribe B's bulkier hand means that he tends to copy slightly fewer half-lines on each side than Scribe A does, even with a twenty-first line added to his sides in gatherings \*18 [12] and \*19 [13]. So either the earlier hands used in the exemplar performed a similar bulking out when they reached Scribe B's portion, or the Nowell scribes neither sought nor achieved a line-by-line replica. Similarly, either Scribe B suddenly changed his mind towards the end of copying *Beowulf*, or the exemplar had a similar extreme compression on the last few sides. None of this seems likely.

This dismissal of his wider argument does not answer the question Boyle highlighted of why Scribe B writes an additional line on 174 (BL177)v–176 (BL179)r. Nor does it explain why Scribe A's 114(122) (BL125)v also has a twenty-first line, and gathering \*16 [10] twenty-two throughout. Some of this may be due to a lack of space, and I make suggestions about scribal decision-making in Chapters 4 and 5. But the scenario of a crisis solved by Scribe B stepping in as a troubleshooting expert does not work, and nor does the proposition of line-by-line copying from the exemplar(s). Without clear evidence to the contrary, it is most reasonable to see the scribes writing their gatherings and texts in the same order as they were originally bound and basing decisions about rulings and the use of space on what they were producing, not what they were copying from. I will make some brief concluding suggestions before moving on in subsequent chapters to more focused consideration of scribal decision-making in the presentation of their texts.

### Suggestions

The narrative best fitting the evidence of scribal activity, gatherings, and textual divisions is as follows. A compiler, who may have been one of the scribes, identified seven or more texts that he wanted to be brought together. In particular, he intended to prefix a set of secular narratives including *Alexander* and *Beowulf* with religious narratives including *Judith* and *St Christopher*. Each of the exemplars for these sets was shared between the scribes. From the first exemplar, Scribe B took *Judith* and the texts on either side of it, while Scribe A took *St Christopher*. From the second exemplar, conversely, Scribe A was given most material, covering *Alexander* and most of *Beowulf*, while the rest of *Beowulf* was given to Scribe B. This type of division of labour was a standard pattern in shared manuscripts, where the senior hand ensured control at significant and challenging moments and sandwiched a junior colleague's



work.<sup>124</sup> The reasoning by which the scribes shared *Beowulf* between them is irrecoverable. However, since the handover gathering, \*17 [11], shows no sign that there was a shortage of space, there is no good reason to assume that the handover was the result of any unexpected problems.

Probably, the scribes shared *Beowulf* between themselves based on the number of gatherings or folios it took up, paying little regard to its text. Scribe A wrote on until he had finished his designated exemplar gatherings, and handed his work over to Scribe B to complete the job. *Wonders* may have come from the same exemplar as the other secular pieces. It has little linguistic evidence to judge from; what there is, and its distribution of *ð* and *þ* forms, aligns it more closely with *Alexander* than with the religious pieces. However, as we shall see in Chapter 4, I find the style of marginal capitals to be consistent within each of the two certain pairs of texts, and anomalous in *Wonders*.<sup>125</sup> It is also the only illustrated piece and, as discussed in Chapter 3, the images show signs of being newly created in the codex and of coming from more than one exemplar. As ever, the evidence is slight, but it seems probable that *Wonders* came from a third exemplar. It makes an effective link text, most notably because it contains both the *Cynocephali* of which St Christopher is a type and the eponymous figure of *Alexander*. Whether *Wonders* was from a third exemplar or not, Scribe A was given the responsibility of producing it, and worked with at least one other person (who could have been Scribe B) to make text and image work together.<sup>126</sup>

It has long been suggested that the ‘mismatched’ hands and broadly low standards of production may be indicative of a minor house, or perhaps of a secular household.<sup>127</sup> In subsequent chapters, I will attempt to show that the poverty of production has perhaps been exaggerated in past analyses, and that there is some evidence to suggest that the codex was put together with sympathy and creativity. The exemplars seem to have been treated with considerable respect by both scribes, and their re-presentation in this codex a deliberate effort to render them accessible to a contemporary audience. A project bringing together three dissimilar exemplars would have been no mean feat. It suggests

124 So, for instance, Cambridge, CCC MS 41; see Gameson, ‘Material Fabric’, n.106 p. 41; for older scribes supervising younger, see Gullick, ‘How Fast Did Scribes Write?’, p. 236 and Chapter 6 below; a case study of close supervision and discussion in Durham A.IV.19 is in Jolly, *Community of St Cuthbert*, pp. 155–162.

125 See also Thomson, ‘Manuscript Stability and Literary Corruption: Our Failure to Understand the *Beowulf* Manuscript’, *Quaestio Insularis* 16 (2015), 54–71; Thomson, ‘Capital Indications’.

126 As demonstrated in Chapter 3.

127 Cf. Stokes, *English Vernacular Minuscule*, p. 95.

both the connections needed to gather exemplar texts and the ambition to conceive of such a compilation. Similarly, the idea that just two isolated and relatively unskilled individuals participated in its production is rendered less likely, both by this ambition and by the findings presented in Chapter 3 about multiple hands involved in the production of the images, frames, and colours in *Wonders* and the challenges taken on in doing so. None of this has to undermine the picture of a minor house or secular household, but the easy assumption that this small, charred, vernacular codex was a minor project at the time of production should be challenged. There is nothing, however, in the codex's history before the English Renaissance, that sheds clearer light on its provenance than the evidence reviewed above.

In the scheme proposed here, the production of the Nowell Codex looks like an attempt, in eleventh-century Mercia, to unite some relatively recent saints' lives with some relatively ancient heroic narratives, using *Wonders* as the bridge between them. It is interesting that each of the two main putative exemplars also contained both prose and verse narratives: one bringing (at least) *Judith* and *St Christopher* together, and the other *Alexander* and *Beowulf*. Founded on speculation as it is, this argument in turn points towards an unspoken conclusion at the heart of this discussion: two scribes wrote the Nowell Codex, up to three other individuals produced and coloured the images and frames, and one person managed the project as a whole.

## The Images in *The Wonders of the East*

In this chapter, I re-evaluate the images in order to make some suggestions about the production of this codex. I argue that there can be little doubt that there is more than one draughtsman at work on the images and that there is a significant difference between the skill exhibited by the different hands.<sup>1</sup> This single finding has considerable significance for our understanding of the context in which the Nowell Codex was made and received. Following the same convention as for the scribes, I call the more skilled hand Draughtsman A and the less skilled Draughtsman B, though this is not to say that they can be identified as the same as – or indeed certainly different from – either scribe. As listed in Appendix 2, I have made a provisional identification of which hand was responsible for which image and where they seem to have worked together. Throughout, I find that the image spaces were planned, and that there is evidence both of instances where text was entered before drawings were executed and of images being supplied first, forcing text to be written around them. Scribe A and the Draughtsmen were, therefore, working in the same place and the same time. Given the difficulties encountered in their execution, it seems broadly likely – though not certain – that all frames were drawn after text and images had been completed. There is less evidence for this, but colours were likely added last of all, and not always in collaboration with the primary draughtsman. These stages need not imply many different people. It is possible that Scribe A was also Draughtsman B and the colourist, and that Scribe B was Draughtsman A, who may have done the framing as well as taking the lead in drawing: it is not, I think, absolutely necessary to postulate more than two hands at play, though more individuals were very probably involved.

It is, however, necessary to see scribe and artists working in interlocked stages. Setting aside the low quality of some illustrations, the mistakes made in the execution of the illustrative scheme underscore how challenging it was to produce the codex and suggest that this was an innovative creation, not a straight copy of an existing collection.<sup>2</sup> The uncertainty, which I broadly connect with attempts at innovation though other explanations are possible, seems

1 See also Thomson, 'Two Artists of the Nowell Codex'.

2 For the role of illustrations in conferring status on a text, and the significant challenge of integrating text and image, see Richard Gameson, *The Role of Art in the Late Anglo-Saxon Church* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 7–9, 30 & 36.

to centre around the largest image. This design, narrating §9, the stealing of gold from giant ants, is not reflected in other versions of the text. Throughout Nowell's copy, variant archetypes used for faces and some doubling of scenes – along with shifting styles and difficulties in executing the planned scheme – collectively suggest that the draughtsmen had more than one exemplar for their work. That is, the three exemplars I have postulated in Chapter 2 should be expanded to four, with two copies likely being used as the basis of this short text. This chapter proceeds on the assumption that mistakes and weaknesses in execution can be useful to scholars of manuscript production. It proposes that, despite the production's numerous weaknesses – which have led to dismissals of its usefulness to scholars in the past – the Nowell *Wonders* is a case study that may tell us a great deal about manuscript production in late Anglo-Saxon England: this thread will be resumed in Chapter 6. Finally, it suggests that the Nowell Codex was an innovative and collaborative undertaking which proved in some ways too ambitious for its makers. Throughout, I refer to the images by their section numbers as listed in Appendix 1.

### A “collection of absurdities”?

The quality of the images in Nowell has been much disparaged. James is an extreme but representative example, calling them a “collection of absurdities which I am rescuing from perhaps merited oblivion”.<sup>3</sup> All readers have followed Sisam's analysis that “[u]nless he found them in his original, a scribe so incompetent in drawing would hardly have ventured on illustrations.”<sup>4</sup> Recent critiques are more toned down: James' “absurd” and Sisam's “ludicrous” and “childish” have become McGurk's “crude” (an often-used adjective in this context).<sup>5</sup> More recently, the images have had their defenders: Mary Olson argues for their playfulness and challenge;<sup>6</sup> Susan Kim and Asa Mittman focus on the interplay between images and text and find much to value.<sup>7</sup> But general

3 James, *Marvels of the East*, p. 9 of the copy as a whole, and of specific images at pp. 55 & 58.

4 ‘Compilation’, p. 78.

5 Rypins, *Prose Texts*, p. xlv; Sisam, ‘Compilation’, pp. 78 & 96; McGurk *et al.*, *Illustrated Miscellany*, regularly pp. 88–95. The same word is used by Ford, *Marvels and Artefact*, p. 18, though he allows the images a “chaotic vibrancy”, and by Knock, *Synoptic Edition*, p. 60.

6 Mary Olson runs through the various condemnations issued by Wanley, Förster, Rypins, and James, *Fair and Varied Forms*, p. 133; cf. Mittman and Kim, *Inconceivable Beasts*, pp. 6–9.

7 Mittman and Kim, *Inconceivable Beasts*.

opinion is clear, and even admirers see Nowell as thrillingly unsettling rather than of mainstream value to wider discussion.

I do not seek to stake a claim for hitherto unrecognised artistic merit. Most of the Nowell images are, by any measure, “hardly refined”.<sup>8</sup> The ‘unclean woman’ of §27, the lower drawing in Figure 5, is a good example. Touches of colour outlining her arms and blotching her chin, in the same shade as her frame, are ugly and confusing without purposefully highlighting anything of interest. Only about half of the frame is coloured, and a small section of it diminishes to a line rather than continuing as a solid bar for her to break. The draughtsmanship is poor, with attempts to show her “eoseles teð” and “eofores teð” (“asses’ teeth” and “boar’s tusks”) barely sustained.<sup>9</sup> Her breasts are added in far too low down. This was presumably to ensure they could be seen as she is explicitly unclothed in the text and her unnecessarily bent right arm covers their natural position. In the context of the page she appears even weaker: an impoverished repetition of the more interesting, but still relatively unsuccessful, image of the bearded hunting woman above.<sup>10</sup>

Other images, while not so poorly executed, are puzzling and seem to bear little relation to the text. The *Sigelwara* (“Ethiopian”) in §32, as shown on the bottom left in Figure 16, has a mask-like face, appears to be wearing some form of textured all-in-one romper suit, and extends his left arm behind him to a much smaller figure who appears to be a naked woman.<sup>11</sup> The seated man in

8 It is worth noting in this context Dormer’s observation that “[d]rawing is an unforgiving technique”, and it is thus easier to find ink drawings wanting than illuminated images, Sally Dormer, ‘Drawings in Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts’, Gresham College 16th May 2012, downloaded from <http://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/drawings-in-anglo-saxon-manuscripts> 4/4/2013. The quotation is from Susan Kim, ‘Man-Eating Monsters and Ants as Big as Dogs: the Alienated Language of the Cotton Vitellius A. xv *Wonders of the East*’, *Animals and the Symbolic in Medieval Art and Literature*, ed. L.A.J.R. Houwen (Groningen, 1997), 38–51, at p. 51.

9 Nowell is the only version which includes both bestial features – it may seem unfair to expect any artist to illustrate this combination, Sisam, ‘Compilation’, n. 2 p. 79.

10 Olson, *Fair and Varied Forms*, tends to read repetition in design as part of a rhythm that works to construct meaning; here it seems lazy. Unimaginative repetition is also a feature of many of the images in the Old English Hexateuch, London, BL, Cotton MS Claudius B. iv; see, for instance the use of the same scene to illustrate death on fols. 10v (thrice), 11r, 11v, 12r (twice), 18r, 19v, 20v, 52r, 52v, 72r, 72v, 76v, 116r, 155v. Rebecca Barnhouse finds significance in some details used in these scenes in ‘Pictorial Exegesis in the Illustrated Old English Hexateuch’, *Enarratio* 6 (1999), 109–132, at pp. 109–110; cf. pp. 115–116 on empty repetition.

11 Mittman and Kim aside, all earlier readers of the manuscript have seen this as a man; Olson, *Fair and Varied Forms*, p. 143 counts three women in the manuscript where this





FIGURE 6 Seated man on 103 (BL106)r and the council of the mountains on 102 (BL105)r.  
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§28 and the council in §25, shown together in Figure 6, are similarly baffling, requiring a great deal of work from the reader to connect them with their respective textual sections.<sup>12</sup> All these discrepancies and weaknesses contribute to a sense that the artistry is second-rate, as emphasised by most earlier scholarship.

However, there are some better finished images. To my eyes, the first ten illustrations at least are executed to a reasonable standard and well-coloured;<sup>13</sup> other images later in the manuscript are also far from 'crude'. I would include in this list of reasonably well-executed work all or part of the images for §19 of the precious tree (first image in Figure 7), the *Panotus* of §21 (the third figure in Figure 19), the first *Catinus* of §28/29 (Figure 10), and the traveller carrying

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makes a fourth; McGurk and Knock, *Illustrated Miscellany*, pp. 99–103, describe the figure as "Man on right outside frame", at p. 103. The shapes on its chest seem to me to resemble the breast archetype used for naked women elsewhere in the text, and the shape at its crotch more triangular than phallic. However, it is no more explicable as a woman than a man and the distinction is merely academic. This puzzling image's use of two figures, one of which is outside the frame, is a little reminiscent of some images in the *Old English Hexateuch*, e.g. fols. 41v, 42v, 54r & v, 67r, 75r, 76r; or of the angel coming to help St Peter in the Caligula Troper (London, BL, Cotton MS Caligula A. xiv) on fol. 22r. The former can be seen on the British Library's Digitised Manuscripts website; the latter Janet Backhouse, *The Golden Age of Anglo-Saxon Art* (London, 1984), as plate 157. On the name *sigelwara* as probably originally *sigelhearwa* see J.R.R. Tolkien, 'Sigelwara Land I', *Medium Ævum* 1 (1932), 183–196 and 'Sigelwara Land II', *Medium Ævum* 3 (1934), 95–111.

12 The council image is well worth comparing with the images of people in discussion in the *Old English Hexateuch*, fols. 19v and 20r, illustrating Genesis 11: 27–29.

13 This may, admittedly, seem a low bar for image quality. I have included here the gold digging ants of §9 and the camels §10, both of which I suggest below are effective designs diminished by the presence of a weaker hand (the late doodler and Draughtsman B respectively).



FIGURE 7 *Magical trees, on, l-r, 100(96) (BL103)v; 102 (BL105)r; 103 (BL106)v. See also colour plate 1.*

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FIGURE 8 *Frontispieces to New Minster's Liber Vitae, Stowe 944 fol. 6r, and the New Minster Charter, Vespasian A. viii, fol. 2v. See also colour plate 2.*

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away a woman of §30 (the second image in Figure 27):<sup>14</sup> while they are still far from masterpieces, fourteen of the thirty-one images do not deserve to be called “absurd” on any criteria. These are workmanlike illustrations to a text

<sup>14</sup> Gameson, *Role of Art*, p. 39, cites the latter image in the context of interaction between image and text.



comparable to those in the Old English Hexateuch or contemporary Prudentius manuscripts.<sup>15</sup>

In any assessment of these images, it should be noted that it is not clear what aesthetic criteria obtained in the eleventh century.<sup>16</sup> Modern critics have most often compared them with the richly painted images in Tiberius and Bodley,<sup>17</sup> but in the period Nowell's relative lack of colour was not in itself an indication of poor quality. The finest example of this, in a different world of quality from Nowell's images, is the frontispiece to New Minster's *Liber Vitae*, the first image in Figure 8, produced around 1031 at Winchester, showing Cnut and Emma (given her English name Ælfgifu) presenting a cross to the house.<sup>18</sup> Written beside their portraits, their names effectively become the first in the *Liber Vitae*. The minimal(ist) use of colour connects the cross held by Cnut with the heavenly Book of Life held by Christ and the document held by Mary, which may be intended to represent New Minster's charter. As could be expected of this major house at the peak of its power, it is a fine example of the so-called 'Winchester' style of draughtsmanship: each figure, even individual monks peeping up from the foot of the page, has a life of its own, created with a few lines of ink, varied in weight and in length for details of body and clothing. With the exception of a slightly cross-eyed Christ, who peers at the viewer, the faces communicate active participation and communion throughout the page.

15 Such as Cleopatra C. viii (s. x / xi); CCCC 23 (s. x / xi); Additional 24199 (s. x / xi). This is of course a much wider tradition: comparable roughly contemporary non-English manuscripts include: München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Codex latinus monacensis MS 29336 (1 (x<sup>ex</sup>, Friesing); Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale MS 9987–91 (s. x / xi, Saint-Amand?); Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. MS 8318, fols. 49–64 + Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica, Reg. lat. MS 596, fols. 26–27 (s. ix / x, Fleury?); Valenciennes, Bibliothèque municipale MS 412, fols. 1–42 (s. x / xi, Saint-Amand?); Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, Vossianus Latinus Octavo MS 15, fols. 42–43 (xi<sup>1</sup>, Limoges). For images from most of these manuscripts and a discussion of some of their relationships, see Richard Stettiner, *Die illustrierten Prudentius-Handschriften* (Berlin, 1905).

16 Though see Mary Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2013) for a sustained effort to engage with and identify a medieval aesthetic.

17 This comparison is so widespread that Mittman and Kim's conscious rejection of it and interest in "this text and these images", *Inconceivable Beast*, p. 5 (emphases theirs), is worth noting.

18 The *Liber Vitae* is London, BL, Stowe MS 944, fols. 6r–6iv. The image prefaces the codex proper. Online as part of *Digitised Manuscripts*, and edited in facsimile by Simon Keynes as *The Liber Vitae of the New Minster and Hyde Abbey Winchester: British Library Stowe 944, together with leaves from British Library Cotton Vespasian A. viii and British Library Cotton Titus D. xxvii*, EEMF 26 (Copenhagen, 1996).

It is a skilful and elegant piece of work.<sup>19</sup> The confidence of this image seems sure to be related to the prestige and presence of the charter presented to New Minster by Edgar, London, BL, Cotton MS Vespasian A.viii, whose frontispiece – the second image in Figure 8 – has Edgar presenting the charter to Christ and the angels in a strikingly similar configuration.<sup>20</sup>

The New Minster Charter was put together around 966. It was probably known to the artist who made the Cnut image, and it has been suggested that the two documents stood beside one another at New Minster to demonstrate the power of the house.<sup>21</sup> To modern eyes, the most striking aspect of these pages when placed beside one another (as they are here) is lavish use of colour, including gold, in the charter contrasting sharply with the austere ink and parchment in the *Liber Vitae*, where occasional colouring is dominated by blank vellum.<sup>22</sup> As Gameson makes clear, these are both books “which used the king”, rather than vice versa, and neither is “in any sense a royal manuscript”.<sup>23</sup> However, Winchester was one of the richest houses of England and at least as heavily patronised by Cnut and his queen as it was by Edgar: there can be little doubt that reasons of aesthetic choice, not economic necessity, lie behind these divergent styles.<sup>24</sup> To eleventh-century eyes, then, sparing use of colour did not imply devaluation or limited artistry.<sup>25</sup> In the *Liber Vitae* frontispiece, a premium seems instead to have been placed on controlled use

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- 19 The image has been discussed extensively in recent scholarship and deserves more consideration than I have given it here. Some useful readings can be found in Francis Wormald, *English Drawings of the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries* (London, 1952), p. 35; Dormer, ‘Drawings’; Olson, *Fair and Varied Forms*, p. 59; Gale Owen-Crocker, ‘Pomp, Piety, and Keeping the Woman in Her Place: The Dress of Cnut and Ælfgifu-Emma’, *Medieval Clothing and Textiles* 1 (2005), 41–52.
  - 20 The charter is S 745. The image is discussed by Richard Gameson in ‘Book Decoration in England, c. 871–1100’, *History of the Book*, ed. Gameson (2012), 249–293, esp. pp. 252–253.
  - 21 Gameson, ‘Book Decoration’, pp. 275–277; Gerchow, ‘Prayers for King Cnut’, pp. 223–225; Bolton, *Cnut*, p. 97, notes the influence of the charter image on that of the *Liber Vitae*.
  - 22 I am grateful to Meg Boulton, who discussed the relatively low-cost aspect of the *Liber Vitae* with me during discussions at UCL’s conference on ‘Stasis in the Medieval World’, 14/4/13.
  - 23 Gameson, ‘Book Decoration’, p. 276.
  - 24 It should be noted in this context that the charter is exceptionally lavish, as the only Anglo-Saxon manuscript to be written entirely in gold. The conclusions here, though, are about how an eleventh-century viewer would see the *Liber Vitae* when placed beside it, not about New Minster’s self-presentation through their charter.
  - 25 Though Wormald, *English Drawings*, p. 17, sees colour as the strongest available indication of status. With more reservation, Dormer, ‘Drawings’, agrees but suggests that drawing was admired by a “well educated minority”.

of colour; skilful execution of figures; and possibly on interactions between images and their text and between images and the external contexts in which they were placed. By the mid-eleventh century, when the Bury Psalter was produced, the usage of image and text as reflexes of one another was well established; this Psalter's elegant interactions have been widely admired as shown, for instance, in the lovely image of the deer drinking from its own name (L. *cervus*) in Psalm 42.<sup>26</sup>

The Nowell Codex is not a psalter, a *liber vitae*, or a gospel book: it is not, in fact, of the proportions or quality of a 'display volume' of any kind. While it comes nowhere near attaining the complexity and beauty of these fine volumes, it does engage with many of the same stylistic ideas, particularly restrained colour, use of space, and interaction with the text. The pictures are there to support interaction with the text, rather than to be things of beauty and wonder in their own right, just as the images of the Old English Hexateuch, while acknowledged as often weak, probably formed part of the interpretive process.<sup>27</sup> It is worth noting that the Hexateuch was probably made at St Augustine's, Canterbury: it was not an impoverished production, just a production of illustrated text likely for a lay patron rather than for spectacular display. Further, the impression of extreme weakness, of 'absurdity', that has struck so many modern readers in relation to the Nowell Codex is primarily due to Draughtsman B's relative weakness and the jarring effect of the work of the two hands when juxtaposed, exacerbated by errors made in the execution of a complex project. The Nowell *Wonders* should be seen less as impoverished and

26 Wormald, *English Drawings*, pp. 47–49; Gameson *Role of Art*, p. 39. The Bury Psalter is Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Reg. lat. MS 12, with a number of images shown in Thomas H. Ohlgren, ed., *Anglo-Saxon Textual Illustration: Photographs of Sixteen Manuscripts with Descriptions and Index* (Kalamazoo, MI, 1992). The *cervus* noted here is Ohlgren's §3.16. Artist F's work in the Harley 603 Psalter (London, BL, Harley MS 603) is another celebrated example of an "intimate relationship between word and image"; see e.g. Gameson, *Role of Art*, n. 40 p. 112.

27 Rebecca Barnhouse, 'Text and Image in the Old English Illustrated Hexateuch' (unpubl. PhD dissertation, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1994), pp. 17–18; David Johnson, 'A Program of Illumination in the Old English Illustrated Hexateuch: Visual Typology?', in *The Old English Hexateuch: Aspects and Approaches*, eds. Rebecca Barnhouse and Benjamin C. Withers (Kalamazoo, MI, 2000), 165–199, at p. 174; Catherine E. Karkov, 'The Anglo-Saxon Genesis: Text, Illustration, and Audience', in *Old English Hexateuch*, ed. Barnhouse and Withers (2000), 201–238, at pp. 207–208. On the weakness of the images, see most significantly Wormald, *English Drawings*; Withers, *Old English Hexateuch*, p. 54 summarises earlier judgements on the images. Gameson draws the distinction between "texts with illustrations" such as *Wonders* and more luxurious "picture book[s]" (among which he would include the Hexateuch, 'Book Decoration', p. 287.

more as over-ambitious, and judged less often against ‘high end’ images and more often against illustrated narrative texts.<sup>28</sup> Against all previous readings of the text, and key to the interpretation I present here, I will now argue that more than one hand worked on the images.

### The Two Artists of the Nowell *Wonders*

In an intriguing analogy for the visually startling shift between the hands of the two scribes shown in Figure 1, the images for §10 and §28 clearly show the work of two different draughtsmen, as shown in Figures 9 and 10.<sup>29</sup> They exhibit similar patterns. The first image has two camels (OE *olfendas*) against a red background. One is picked out neatly, even elegantly. The second shows clear indications of an attempt to draw an identical animal: it copies details such as the vertical lines inside the first camel’s ears and the tooth projecting down from the back of its mouth. But it is drawn altogether more roughly, with less subtlety of line and sense of proportion. The eye looks manic rather than intelligent, and the snout more lumpen than deft. Where it passes behind the first camel, this second draughtsman did not realise that parts of it should still



FIGURE 9 Two camels by different hands on 98(100) (BL101)v. See also colour plate 3.

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- 28 It should be noted in this context that Tiberius B. v and Bodley 614 both set their higher quality copies of *Wonders* alongside ‘scientific’ texts; it is only the context provided by Nowell that treats it as a narrative of some form.
- 29 I am deeply indebted to C.L. Fawson, who first suggested two different draughtsmen to me when looking at the image of hens, §3, 96(98) (BL99)r.

be visible between its companion's tail and rump, and beneath its belly.<sup>30</sup> It is drawn by a much less skilled hand. It was also certainly an original element of the drawing, as both camels are blank parchment figures against a red background; no background colour has been erased to make space for it at some later date.

The same pattern can be observed on the penultimate page of *Wonders*. Two animals, called *catinos* in the text, stand one behind the other, baying up at the writing before them. The first figure is elegant, with layered curls and muscle curvature showing the strain in its mouth and body. In its careful line and forceful presence it is not entirely ridiculous to compare its quality of execution with animals from the Bury Psalter, such as the two beasts on folio 36r.<sup>31</sup> However, the second *Catinus*, while mostly lost to manuscript damage, is clearly in no way comparable to that masterpiece. There is no variation in the weight and thickness of line used to draw it; the first creature's pert nose becomes a beak; muscle definition becomes random lines more akin to scars.

The briefest consideration of these paired forms puts it beyond reasonable doubt that there were two draughtsmen at work, whom I call A and B, with A as the first and more skilful hand and B as the one repeating with less skill. Once they have been identified, the possibility is opened up of seeing them throughout the text and attempting to attribute all images to one hand or another. There are, for instance, three very similar illustrations of trees, shown in Figure 7.<sup>32</sup> On the basis of its controlled design and neat terminal buds, the



FIGURE 10 *Catinii* by different hands on 103 (BL106)r. See also colour plate 4.

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30 Perhaps a slightly unfair criticism, as similar mistakes are made in many manuscripts, including those of the sheep in Tiberius.

31 Ohlgen, *Textual Illustration*, §3.13.

32 In terms of the design, with multiple elements to the trunk, this is very similar to the trees on fols. 7v and 8r of the Old English Hexateuch. The trees are also shown on the cover of this volume.

first (for §19) can be confidently attributed to Draughtsman A. By contrast, on the basis of its lack of control and unambitious triangular buds, the second (for §24) is probably the work of Draughtsman B. The third (illustrating §31) is less weak than the second, but does not exhibit Draughtsman A's sense of design and (relative) ambition: it is probably the work of Draughtsman B, and may indicate him developing his skill.

It is interesting that some of the images which I see as weaker, and therefore attributable to Draughtsman B, have details drawn with more fineness and variation in line; these elements are therefore possibly attributable to Draughtsman A. The giant man of §12/13, the top-right figure of Figure 29, holds an upside-down sceptre in his outstretched right hand, both of which are much more precisely drawn than the other hand or rest of the figure. The *Panotus* of §21, shown as the third image in Figure 19, has foliage in the bottom right hand corner, executed with a much finer quality of line than is the figure. The conference on the mountain, §25, shown as the second image in Figure 6, has a third figure drawn in a different style on the right, separate from the conversation between the two main figures. The hunting woman of §26, the first image in Figure 5, has an elegantly drawn beast, to hunt with or to pursue. It is possible that the more skilled artist, without being able to alter his partner's images significantly, felt the need to supplement or balance out some weaker drawings. A list of the images and their frames, and my cautious attributions to the different hands including possible shared images, is included as Appendix 2. As shown there, I see six shared images, seventeen by A alone, and eight by B alone.<sup>33</sup> It may be significant that the images I attribute solely to B appear later in the text and often in short runs – so I see him as responsible for most of the images in the double spread of 102 (BL105)v and 103 (BL106)r, and for the last two images of the text. If the images were produced sequentially, it is feasible to see B learning from A and gradually assuming more responsibility. There does not seem to be any particular significance to most of the shared images; probably, as with the camels and *Catinii*, advantage was taken of the illustration type, featuring doubled animals, to allow B to learn from A. That such does not happen on the first page of the text with the giant sheep may have been the result of a concern for this to be as finely produced as possible – also evident in the floreate corners of the first frame here (Figure 13). Or it may just not have occurred to the team until it had been drawn that such an image

33 It should be noted that these attributions are provisional and broadly impressionistic. It is very difficult to securely attribute weak work, and it is entirely possible that B improved, or had better days, and that A drew more weakly on occasion (as I argue for scribal stints in Chapters 4, 5, and 6), for he was no master of his craft.

offered opportunities for learning. In some places, shared images are where I see A supplementing weak images for which B had been responsible, rather than truly shared design and production.

Further weakening the quality of the image scheme is a third – probably later – hand, whose actions show him to have been more of a doodler than a draughtsman. In §9, the text's largest image tells the story of how gold can be stolen from giant ants using three camels. Parts are clearly by Draughtsman A: the camels, which are closer to his *Catinus* than his camel; the tree to which the young camel is tethered, which is similar to his tree for §19; perhaps the overall design, unique to this manuscript, was his.<sup>34</sup> In keeping with his general level of competence, the image is not a masterpiece: the man with his gold is rigid rather than beautiful; the device used to load gold onto the female camel's back is graphically interesting rather than convincing or clear. Draughtsman A is not here being proposed as a master of his craft; just as a comparatively controlled hand and perhaps a skilful designer. At least two parts of the picture, however, are extraneous and very poorly executed. A crude ink sketch of a massive ant curls around Scribe A's writing on the first line of the page. It seems to be drawn in imitation of the most elegant ant, crouching immediately below it, but misses a front foot because that would cross the word.<sup>35</sup> Beside it is a similarly crude sketch of an animal's head. To my eyes, this looks most like an emu; given its placement, it was probably an imitation of the male camel's head, which has been lost to the 1731 fire, but which was likely to be similar to the female camel's head on the other side of the image. Unlike Draughtsman B's imitative drawings, which fill the frame by doubling the animals, these sketches are pre-conceived of as incomplete. And where Draughtsman B is an unsophisticated artist lacking fine control of line and form, this hand is genuinely weak: the roughness of the incomplete ant and camel head exceeds the weakness of Draughtsman B's to at least the same extent as his exceeds that of Draughtsman A. It seems likely, then, that these doodles were made by a later reader who admired the drawings and sought to imitate them: it could be linked with the partial Middle English gloss on 99(95) (BL102)v, shown as a whole page and with two more detailed images in Figure 12.<sup>36</sup> Different readers have seen one, two, or three "uncertain and wobbly" hands in this gloss, and

34 Fulk notes it as a "particularly ambitious" illustration, *Beowulf Manuscript*, p. xii.

35 Comparable 'doodles' where truncated limbs or other omissions make way for the text can be seen in e.g. London, BL, Cotton MS Nero A. i fols. 70–177 on fols. 135r, 136v, and 177r.

36 The ant-camel section of the text is referred to in the Old English prognostics for sunshine, in the twelfth-century Worcester manuscript Hatton 115, fols. 149v–150r, as shown by Chardonnens, 'Exotic Sheep', pp. 141–144; the manuscripts may be related, or they could



FIGURE 11 Ants as large as dogs having their gold stolen from them on 98(100) (BL101)r. See also colour plate 5.

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it may merit further investigation;<sup>37</sup> for now, though, the point remains that there are so many stages of unidentified interaction with the Nowell Codex

be simply joint testimony to the interest of this section. I am not aware of any similar uses of the contents of 99(95) (BL102)v.

37 I am grateful to Profs. Winfried Rudolf and Linne Moody and to Dr Estelle Stubbs for discussing this with me. The quotation is from Dr Stubbs' description, pers. corr. 24/7/14. The gloss is not widely discussed, but see Leake, 'Middle English Glosses', Malone, *Nowell Codex*, p. 37, and Kiernan, *Beowulf' Manuscript*, n. 53 p. 143, both of whom see two hands. The glossed page is shown in Roberts, *Guide to Scripts*, p. 63.





FIGURE 12 99(95) (BL102)v, with enlarged views of the sections with a Middle English gloss, probably in two hands.

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that any specific connections between different activities would be unsafe at best. It is impossible to know why this particular page attracted such attention, three sides after the doodles. It is, though, worth noting that it is unusually laid out, with the dragons stretching across the full page and containing three images. The three creatures, with a humanoid *Blemmya*, serpentine dragons, and half-human half-bestial Centaur echo the structure of the *Liber monstrorum*, and arguably the three principal monsters of *Beowulf*.<sup>38</sup> Given that the lost male camel is imitated, the doodling must pre-date the 1731 fire (as does the writing), but it cannot be placed with any more certainty. This analysis does not undermine Mittman and Kim's finding that this image is destabilising and

38 I am grateful to Andy Orchard for pointing this out to me. The tripartite structure of the *Liber monstrorum* is noted in *Pride and Prodigies*, p. 87, and discussed in relation to *Beowulf* pp. 110–111, with references.

dramatic, simultaneously confronting and encompassing the text.<sup>39</sup> But any such reading is of the codex as it now stands, not as it was first designed.

It is worth noting that in other books produced in the period, work can be shared, but usually with both a hierarchy and clear separation of artists. For instance, in the early eleventh-century Harley 603 Psalter, probably produced at Christ Church, Canterbury, at least six different artistic hands worked on the original production, later supplemented by up to five more.<sup>40</sup> Each original artist seems to have had responsibility for his own quire(s), with some collaboration: here, the variant hands are probably an attempt to minimise production time and to control the burden given to each individual. At least one of the Harley artists (Artist G) later added figures and other details to work by other artists, perhaps to make up for shortcomings that he identified.<sup>41</sup> However, as far as I know, Nowell is the first identified Anglo-Saxon instance of two artists working in the same quire, let alone the same page – and let alone again the same image.<sup>42</sup> The twelfth-century Winchester Bible, though, provides an analogue. In this lavish production, six different hands have been identified working together to produce the images and initials, in a number of which one hand sketched the design in drypoint and another added details and colour.<sup>43</sup> It seems, indeed, to have been a project that evolved in scope and design, resulting in a remarkable “diversity of style”; that so many of its drawings are unfinished may be a result of a patron’s overreaching ambition.<sup>44</sup>

The Nowell Codex is not usually set in the company of such high status manuscripts, which serve as a reminder that this kind of project was often a

39 Mittman and Kim, *Inconceivable Beasts*, pp. 10–11 & 235.

40 Gameson, *Role of Art*, p. 18; Noel, *Harley Psalter*, esp. pp. 124–129 and 130–140 on the sequence of production.

41 Noel, *Harley Psalter*, pp. 100–112, with additions Noel sees G making listed, pp. 107–112. Artist E probably also added to Artist A’s image on fols. 8v and 11r, Noel, *Harley Psalter*, p. 124. Noel is developing an argument made by Richard Gameson, ‘The Anglo-Saxon Artists of the Harley (603) Psalter’, *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 143 (1990), 29–48.

42 Mary Dockray-Miller, *The Books and the Life of Judith of Flanders* (Farnham, 2015), p. 35, argues that the artists working for Judith of Flanders on the miniatures of New York, Morgan Library and Museum MS M.708, Morgan M.709, and Monte Cassino, Archivio della Badia MS 437 all influenced one another’s “decorative motifs, compositions, iconographical choices, and errors”.

43 Walter Oakeshott, *The Artists of the Winchester Bible with forty-four reproductions of details from their work and an introduction* (London, 1945), esp. pp. 7–8, 14–15; Donovan, *Winchester Bible*, esp. pp. 27–28.

44 Donovan, *Winchester Bible*, pp. 28 & 31.

significant undertaking. It is perhaps yet more surprising that the challenge of bringing different artists together was taken on when the draughtsmen have such evidently different levels of skill. It seems here to be the case that a less capable artist was given space to shadow the work of a stronger hand who was himself not much more than competent, and that the secondary artist was given some illustrations to work on independently. This is more similar to the communal work of scribes which is, I argue in Chapter 6, a strong feature of manuscripts in this period, than it is to analogous artistic productions. It can certainly be placed in parallel to the 'younger' and 'older' hands of the manuscript as a whole (Scribes A and B respectively), although the relationship between those two is entirely unclear. We could be witnessing apprenticeship in action, though it would require considerably more evidence to build any certainty in such a conclusion. The variation in quality could also be placed in the known context of artists who travelled to minor houses from the powerful centres: possibly a resident in a smaller scriptorium is learning from an itinerant professional, though the workmanlike quality of Draughtsman A's images does not lend itself to such a reading.<sup>45</sup> Conner argues that scribes working together sought to match their hands in a performance of spiritual communality.<sup>46</sup>

45 Itinerancy is widely understood as a fundamental aspect of manuscript culture. Temple, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, notes the itinerant nature of some scribes at p. 17; Dormer, 'Drawings', adds artists to this and suggests that some may have been professional members of the laity, with which Gameson agrees, 'Book Decoration', p. 281; the master artist of Harley 2904 fol. 3v, at work in a number of other high grade manuscripts, certainly moved around but his degree of independence is not clear, see e.g. Gameson, 'Book Production', pp. 203–204; Noel discusses the movement of artists in relation to the spread of styles and imagery, *Harley Psalter*, p. 148; Donovan, *Winchester Bible*, notes the probability of artists as "travelling professionals" in the twelfth century, p. 24; Dockray-Miller suggests that an uncorrected error in New York, Morgan Library and Museum MS M.709 – one of Judith of Flanders' gospel-books – suggests that the "visiting artist" from Peterborough must have returned to his monastic scriptorium before the error was discovered, *Judith of Flanders*, p. 36. Linda L. Brownrigg suggests that major centres may have sent out artists on an irregular basis, and that many incomplete books "may have been waiting in vain for a travelling artist", 'Manuscripts Containing English Decoration 871–1066, Catalogued and Illustrated: A Review', *ASE* 7 (1978), 239–266, at p. 240. The priest Goding, recorded in Hemming's *Cartulary* as receiving payment of land from St Oswald for work in a number of books, may have been independent (so Ganz, 'Latin Script in England', p. 192), but may also have been a member of the Worcester *familia* (so Gameson, 'Book Production at Worcester', p. 198; but cf. his later more cautious comment in 'Scribes and Scriptoria', at p. 99).

46 Conner, 'Matched Scribal Hands', esp. pp. 46–49. Communal scriptorium activity in the period is discussed further in Chapter 6.

It is just possible that the shared drawing of an image could have been a version of this performative unity for members of a religious house, only partially undermined by the failure to match style successfully. Or perhaps it was a matter of expediency, producing the manuscript as swiftly as possible for a specific patron. The possibilities are multiple, but the fact of several hands collaborating in its production should fundamentally alter our understanding of this manuscript.

### Frames

Now that it is clear that earlier assumptions about the production of the images were wrong, it is important to reconsider the processes by which they were made. If the images are the result of planned teamwork rather than Scribe A incompetently scrawling his exemplar's images as he went along, then the making of the Nowell Codex was a more complex affair than has been assumed. I will therefore briefly look at some other features of these images to attempt to clarify the communal process of production argued for: first framing and colouration, then placement and design. In the process, I hope to reinforce the idea of collective effort, and to suggest that the impression of 'crudeness' is at least partly a result of the project proving to be more creatively challenging than its executors were equipped to handle, rather than purely a result of incompetence.

It is clear that whoever was responsible for framing made no attempt at any point to produce an elaborate frame of the type regularly used at some of the great centres of textual production during this period, which are sometimes regarded as characterising a 'Winchester' style.<sup>47</sup> It is possible to conclude from

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47 Gameson notes that frames of any degree of elaboration were rarely used for drawings (as opposed to paintings or illuminations) and discusses some types of decorated frame, *Role of Art*, pp. 193 & 195–208 respectively. On the basis of its lack of Winchester borders, Temple, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts* places New York, Morgan Library and Museum ms M.869 into the 'Utrecht school', p. 75, but this rigid distinction is not entirely tenable and is certainly not applicable by the mid-eleventh century. Arguing from individual characteristics to identify a school of origin could equally well suggest that the focus on individual animals with plant ornament is a feature of Ringerike style, which is plainly not the case here (see Carola Hicks, *Animals in Early Medieval Art* (Edinburgh, 1993), pp. 246–248 for a straightforward description of Ringerike.) Friedman argues that not using ornate frames could have been intentional in Tiberius B. v, as plain borders "help to focus our attention on parts of the monstrous anatomy which protrude from pictorial space", 'Marvels-of-the-East', p. 334.



FIGURE 13 *The first two images of the text, both of sheep and with different frames, on 95(97) (BL98)v.*

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this that the framing artist was unskilled, working inconsistently and with no sensitivity for how his material was presented; or that his copy text had no frames, or simple lines, and he was instructed to add them too late to do so effectively. However, given the clear attempts to decorate some frames in different ways, and the number of instances where an active decision has been taken to leave off one or more framing edge, to have the image cross into the frame, or to construct a frame which forms part of the image itself, it seems most reasonable to conclude that we have here some form of combination of experimentation and ignorance: perhaps an active exploration of the framing possibilities available given that images and text were produced without much consideration of the space needed for frames.

The majority of the frames were consistently produced after and in response to the space available between images and text. Where there is no room for a frame, as with the ant-camel image, it is simply left out. Where a frame can have four solid bars, as with the two-headed man in §11, shown as the first image in Figure 15, it does. Where an edge cannot be a solid bar because the text comes too close to the image, it becomes a single ink line, as with the left hand line for the camels (§10) shown in Figure 9, or the top edge to the second image of sheep, as in the lower image of Figure 13.<sup>48</sup> Or it is left off altogether, as

48 The same expedient is used on (by my count) 48 occasions in the Old English Hexateuch, on fols. 5r, 5v, 6r, 8v, 10v, 12r, 14v, 17r, 18r, 18v, 22r, 22v, 23r, 30v, 31r, 31v, 45r, 53r, 69v, 72v, 73r, 75r, 76r, 78v, 79r, 80v, 81v, 82v, 83r, 84r, 89v, 91v, 102r, 107r, 108v, 112r, 119r, 120r, 120v, 121v, 122v, 123v, 125v, 126r, 127v, 137r, 152r, and 153v. The inner line of the frame is flexed around the image on fols. 7v, 27r, 31v, 34r, 45v, 58r, 58v, 60r, 66r, 66v, 82r, 87v, 89r, and 120r,

with both images on 96(98) (BL99)r, §3 and §4 in Figure 14.<sup>49</sup> The framer did not lack ambition: he adds decoration to the corners of his very first frame, the first image in Figure 13, the bottom left of which is restricted in size by the proximity of the text in an indication of being drawn after the text.<sup>50</sup> He also introduces some decorative bars to frames, and was probably responsible for the elegance of the frame shaped like an architectural arch for §28/29, shown as the first image in 6.<sup>51</sup> But the space occupied by text and images simply did not give him enough room to do more in most instances. This inconsistency, sometimes with scrappiness and sometimes with productive creativity, is not particularly unusual in the period; it can be seen, for instance, in Cleopatra C. viii's *Psychomachia*, for much the same reason.

In some cases in Nowell, the framer was given a choice between drawing his frame through the text or through the image: he can be seen to change his mind in the giant man shown in the top right of Figure 29, illustrating §12 or §13, where a line is extended for the frame at the foot of the image, but the vertical bar is drawn an inch or so within it, so that two thirds of the frame's bar is not covered by the man's arm. Traces of a similar line are discernible at the top of the frame and similar indications of uncertain and incomplete framing lines can be seen on 96(98) (BL99)v and 99(95) (BL102)v. Here, it is likely that the framer intended to draw a frame around the whole image, and started to do so. However, given the juxtaposition of image and text with which he was presented, he elected to withdraw the frame, pulling it back to contain just the figure, excluding his hand and sceptre. This seems to show us the process of decision-making, of responsive design, in the making of the text. The sceptre is too close to the text to permit a frame – even a single ink line – to go outside

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sometimes to emphasise different statuses in the scene rather than as a response to a lack of control in the images.

- 49 Frames are omitted in the Old English Hexateuch on fols. 5v, 15r, and 71r. At least the first two occasions, and probably all three, are a result of images and text coming too close to one another.
- 50 The framer of the Old English Hexateuch also only decorates the frame of his first image, on fol. 2r, but as this is a full page decorative image to preface the text, its exceptional nature is much clearer.
- 51 Decorative bars can be seen on 96(98) (BL99)v, 101 (BL104)v and 102 (B105)v. Mittman and Kim note the variation in frames, discussing the impact it has on perception of the images in detail *Inconceivable Beasts*, pp. 137–181, see esp. pp. 144–147; they list the different frame types as Appendix B, *Inconceivable Beasts*, pp. 241–244. Compare moments of creative framing in the Old English Hexateuch, such as the upper line of a building becoming part of the frame on fol. 36v, or the lower edge of a frame collapsing into a river for sheep to drink from on fol. 44r.



FIGURE 14 *Hens and wild deer on the second side of Wonders, 96(98) (BL99)r.*

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it. The expedient of a wavy line, as adopted for the illustration of camels on the facing page, would not work as the draughtsman has come too close to the text to allow this to happen without some part of the image remaining outside the frame. Uncertainty and adaptation result in an interesting confrontation between sceptre and text.<sup>52</sup> Further, the indecision here suggests that there was neither a clear exemplar to follow nor any drafting stage for the framer, who drew directly in ink. This sense of haste or confusion in the production can also be seen in a number of aspects of scribal behaviour.<sup>53</sup> It is interesting, too, that in contrast to a number of higher status (and quality) but incomplete image schemes in the period, the overriding requirement here seems to have been to complete all frames with images, regardless of the quality of execution.<sup>54</sup> This in turn invites speculation that Nowell was produced to a deadline, possibly even on commission; or that, while some aspects of the planned project were clear, others were less so and communication between the different people working on the codex was less than ideal.

It does not seem likely that Draughtsman A was the framer, given the lack of concern for framing shown by the draughtsman in his execution of images such as the giant's hand or the large design with ants and camels. Draughtsman B may have been responsible, but the variations in frame design are not easy to

52 Compare fol. 23v in the Old English Hexateuch, where the separation in friendship of Abram and Lot in fertile lands related in Genesis 13 is shown by the waters from which Lot's flock drink flowing out of his frame, across the single line of text noting that Abram dwelt in Canaan, and tempting Abram's flock.

53 Discussed further in Chapters 4 and 5.

54 On incomplete image schemes in high status manuscripts, see Gameson, 'Book Decoration', pp. 283–285.





FIGURE 15 *The two-headed men of §11 from Nowell, 98(100) (BL101)v, and Tiberius B. v, 81r.*  
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 TIBERIUS B. V.

connect with his tendency to imitate or to produce conservative illustrations. Given that some difficulties encountered in framing result from the placement of text, Scribe A is not likely to have been the framer either. It is plausible, therefore, that this was a third hand brought in to finish the text off, possibly responsible for both frames and colour, or perhaps different hands were responsible for different frames. It is also feasible that Draughtsman A, having completed his images, was then asked to insert frames. This minimises the hands involved in execution, and explains the lack of preparation for framing in the execution of images. Either way – with a third hand coming in to supply frames, or an external pair of eyes critiquing the lack of them – a further, demanding, stage of production was involved, and some at least of the demands seem to have come from someone other than the producers themselves.

There are a number of instances where the violation of framed boundaries in the Nowell *Wonders* makes the celebrated intrusion into frames employed by the Anglo-Saxon *Psychomachia* appear rather tame and feeble, as in, for instance, the excesses of *Luxuria's* dancing being emphasised by her hands and feet entering the bars of the frame.<sup>55</sup> This experimentation with boundaries

55 Additional 24199, fol. 18, reproduced in Backhouse, *Golden Age*, no. 46. Herbert R. Broderick identifies frame-violation as a particularly Anglo-Saxon trait, 'Some Attitudes Toward the Frame in Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts of the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries', *Artibus et Historiae* 3 (1982), 31–42, p. 40. Cf. Wormald, *English Drawings*, p. 28. Friedman also



may represent part of a movement towards unframed freedom as epitomised by the Utrecht Psalter and its insular imitators.<sup>56</sup> It could also be read as part of the same impulse towards violation and eruption that has been argued for Tiberius, used (again, comparatively tamely) to suggest the wildness and danger of the marvels. In either reading, the addition of frames to Nowell may have been an attempt to 'upgrade' the manuscript, or simply to cope with some unfortunate spaces left around images where draughtsmen and scribe had not communicated effectively. However it happened, the effect is often serendipitous. The Tiberius image of the two-headed man in §11 is often praised and is worth comparing with that of Nowell: they are side by side in Figure 15. As with a number of Tiberius' images, the size of the figure is emphasized by showing it pressed against its frame (on the right in Figure 15), but Nowell's large figure does not simply strain: it breaks out. It is worth noting that the images follow similar schemes, with an extra-textual horn in the right hand, rocks beneath the feet, and black hair separating the two faces; a number of images in Nowell and Tiberius have curiously similar designs with no textual basis which could be attributable to a common exemplar, though the differences are significant enough to require several intervening stages for which we have no evidence. Apart from its higher quality of execution, the nakedness of the Tiberius image sets it apart, along with the lack of the frame-breaking foliage used in Nowell. Extra-textual, hand-held foliage is habitually used by Draughtsman A, often in situations where it breaks the frame, and we can assume that it was usually introduced by him. This may have been intended simply to fill awkward

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compares Nowell's frame-violations with the various manuscripts of Prudentius' *Psychomachia* (for some examples see note 15, above), 'Marvels-of-the-East', p. 324. Susan Kim is, I think, correct when she identifies the Nowell images as "characterised by their aggressive and persistent movement outside their frames", 'Man-Eating Monsters', p. 40. The images are discussed most thoroughly in Gernot R. Wieland, 'The Origin and Development of the Anglo-Saxon *Psychomachia* Illustrations', *ASE* 26 (1997), 169–186. I cannot account for the most recent discussion of the Nowell frames which claims them as always "a solid boundary separating the reader from the wonder", in Barajas, 'Reframing the Monstrous', p. 252.

56 The Utrecht Psalter (Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS 32 (Script. eccl. 484) fols. 1–91) is discussed in a number of places, and can be viewed online at <<http://psalter.library.uu.nl/>>, last accessed 19/7/16. See for instance Wormald, *English Drawings*, p. 21. The style it inspired is usually called the 'Utrecht style', distinguished from the 'Winchester school'. Wormald describes these styles in detail, and Friedman, 'Marvels-of-the-East', p. 322 sees the Nowell images as "very like those of the earliest 'Winchester school'". I see no particular reason to assign them to one 'school' or the other not least because, if there ever were any clear distinctions, they were breaking down by the early eleventh century, and are only readily identifiable in very fine work.



FIGURE 16 103 (BL106)v and details of textual squeezing and spacing. See also colour plate 6.

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empty hands or parchment, but the result is often striking. As with its minimal use of colour, whether by accident or design the *Nowell Wonders* seems at least adequate and – compared with the admired breaking in *Psychomachia* – radical and exciting in its aesthetic impact in the context of the eleventh century. Nowell seems to reject the controlled, framed contexts of Tiberius and Bodley, and creates an interpenetrating world.<sup>57</sup> Text and image here inhabit the same universe.

Most of these unstable interactions are likely to have been primarily caused by the inexperience of those who worked on the manuscript before the framer got to work. Only once does the scribe successfully end a section at the end of a page: §18 does so, on 100(96) (BL103)r, enabling the verso to open with a new section. Far more frequently, a section starts on the final line of a page, or ends on its first. As shown in Figure 16, the final page of the text, 103 (BL106)v, is particularly striking as an example of poor execution of an abbreviated conclusion. The text is more compressed than it needs to be on folio line 4, with “to cȳmð” squeezed and intruding into the image space. Then, when §32 ended

57 Mittman and Kim, *Inconceivable Beasts*, throughout, e.g. pp. 31–33, 139–146 & 150–151; cf. Olson, *Fair and Varied Forms*, p. 133, who argues that, in Nowell, “words and pictures interpenetrate”.



FIGURE 17 Detail of *þ* crossing the image of the council on 102 (BL105)r.

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at line 15, the scribe was left with too little text to fill the side. Lines 18 and 19 have just three and two words respectively, clearly trying to space them out to make up the difference, but only leaving a rather awkward space to which the draughtsman does not respond.<sup>58</sup> If the image were produced first, this indicates extremely poor planning from Scribe A; if (as is, I think, more likely here) the text came first, the draughtsman – probably Draughtsman B – is showing a lack of imagination and freedom, resulting in that puzzling and somewhat insipid image at the end of the text discussed above and shown in Figure 16.

Another clumsy piece of editing occurs in §25, towards the end of 102 (BL105)r describing the council on the mountain shown in Figure 6. The text excluded from this section is grammatically necessary. But this is another place where the scribe felt pressured, as shown by how cramped letters and word spacing become in the last line of text above the image. This is not an infrequent phenomenon in *Wonders*: the same happens on the image of the temple on the previous side. In §25, though, and as shown in Figure 17, the descender of *þ* in *þæn* crosses the head of one of the speakers, indicating a degree of competing tension between the demands of scribe and artist. The preset image space and the need to fit his text around it probably forced Scribe A to make a decision about what to exclude. Given that this compression does not begin until the last line of the section – indeed, it only really starts half-way through the manuscript line – it seems clear that the scribe is failing to plan more than a few words ahead and is therefore making decisions on an ad hoc basis about how his copying should proceed. That is, under (perceived) pressure the scribe made a decision to exclude text in order to allow the draughtsman the space he demanded. At this point, preserving the image spaces, and ending the text for an image above it rather than continuing it below, was more important

<sup>58</sup> Compare the similarly improvised, but more artful, ending to a scribal stint on fol. 119v of the Blickling Homilies, Scheide 71, discussed in Chapters 4 and 6 and shown in Figure 44.



FIGURE 18 *The two-headed snake and detail of textual interaction on 96(98) (BL99)v. See also colour plate 7.*

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than producing a fully coherent text. We shall return to this issue of significant uncorrected errors in Chapter 4.

By contrast, there are some occasions where the scribe has made a different decision (or not made a decision at all) and not abbreviated his text, consequently getting in the way of the draughtsman's plans. On 96(98) (BL99)r, a line of text comes in at the top of the page, reducing the pre-planned image space to just two scribal lines. This means that there is no space for a frame; indeed, there is barely space for the image, which is of a two-headed snake. In one of the interesting variations in layout and design typical of Nowell's *Wonders*, this image stretches across the full width of the page; it had probably been intended to occupy three scribal lines and perhaps the top margin. But the line of text intruding at the top of the side means that the space is more restricted, and, as shown in Figure 18, Draughtsman A has his snake stretch across the full page in a riot of colours, bands, and swirls, its twin heads hissing up – lines have been drawn to show the direction of their ire – at the word *deor* (“beast”) which ends the intrusive first line of the page.<sup>59</sup> They could conceivably be taken to represent poisonous breath or even flames, but have no textual basis. The snake's anger is understandable, but the scribe's lack of control over the text has arguably been serendipitous, resulting in an interesting interaction between words and image.<sup>60</sup>

This kind of conflict between images and text is not infrequent in manuscripts; the most well-known instance is in Junius 11. Here, scribe and artist

59 The use of dots and lines is similar to that used in London, BL, Cotton MS Tiberius C. vi for the dragon fighting with Michael on fol. 16r, shown by Gameson, *Role of Art* as Figure 17b. Cf. Ford's discussion of the motif as replicated in the Icelandic *Physiologi* (Reykjavík, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, MS 673a 4<sup>o</sup> I + II, formerly Copenhagen, Arnarnagðæanske Samling, MS 673a 4<sup>o</sup> I + II) in *Marvels and Artefact*, p. 28.

60 On text and image responding to one another see e.g. Hamburger, *Script as Image*; Gameson, 'Book Decoration', p. 265; Michelle Brown, 'Writing in the Insular World', *History of the Book*, ed. Gameson (2012), 121–166, p. 124.

seem to have had different ideas about the images required by the text, with the scribe seemingly expecting a large number of relatively small illustrations where the artist inclines towards larger designs. Gameson proposes that when the artist finally draws through the text which seeks to constrain his image on page 77, he is in effect “complaining about the difficulties of the task that the scribe or designer had imposed upon him”, resulting in the “nadir” of interactions between image and text.<sup>61</sup> Similarly, in the Old English Hexateuch the regular size of frames often causes difficulties for the draughtsman. When simple scenes are being illustrated, the long rectangle is often left mostly empty, with figures drawn only in the centre. This even happens at dramatic moments, as on fol. 85v showing Moses ending the plague of hail in Exodus 9. Particularly in the first third of the manuscript (though it resumes as a similar challenge at fols. 112v–113r), there is a frequent pattern of three image spaces being left on a side. This proves far too demanding for all but the most exciting of narrative sequences: often, the draughtsman simply could not think of what to draw for each frame, and images are effectively repeated as on, for instance, fols. 19v–20r. It is possible to read even this kind of apparent mis-match of intention between draughtsmen and their colleagues as productive. In Harley 603, fol. 71 illustrates Psalm 138: 8 with a hellmouth drawn directly over text about God being present even within hell itself.<sup>62</sup> In the New Minster *Liber Vitae* image of Figure 8, writing on an image is simultaneously part of the picture – clarifying who is represented – and part of the text, making Cnut and Emma-Ælfgifu the first names in the community’s list of the saved. Experimentation with interactions between text and image are, by accident or design, characteristic of the period.

Along with the two-headed snake, tense confrontations between the animals of the Nowell *Wonders* and the words that define them occur frequently. As shown in Figure 13, the sheep of §1 stands tall and elegant, facing away from the text and serene against a blue background in its decorative frame. The two at the foot of the page, however, stand with grimacing mouths, glaring directly at the text’s explanation that “þær beoð peðras acenneð on oxna micelnes” (“there rams are born as huge as oxen”).<sup>63</sup> These are at least kept away from the text by their frame: the eight-legged creature of §4 is, as shown in Figure 14, more confrontational with two heads baring their teeth, tongues lolling. With

61 *Role of Art*, p. 38.

62 I am grateful to Maidie Hilmo for discussing this with me, pers. corr. 20/4/16. Cf. Olson, who would argue that written words are already on the same plane as the pictorial; see *Fair and Varied Forms*, p. xx.

63 95v (BL 98v). 13–15.

no left hand side for the frame, they confront their own description head on. The first *Catinus*, shown in Figure 10, is brought into similar contact with the text, baying at the words that describe it. The seven-breasted giant of §12/13 brandishes a sceptre of some form right next to the writing. The figure itself, while glaring, is well separated from the text by distance and a solid frame. Outside the frame, however, his disproportionately large hand comes right next to the text, as does his sceptre's floreate decoration at the other end. This suggests that the detail of hand and sceptre was added to use the additional space left by the text, perhaps by Draughtsman A supplementing a weak image by his junior.<sup>64</sup> There does, indeed, seem to be a difference in quality of figure and hand. Very like the *Sigelwara*, the figure is unsubtly drawn, where his hand and sceptre exhibit much finer variance of line weight with elegant terminals to the 'sceptre' and a precise thumb. It is probable that both figures are Draughtsman B's, with the hands and sceptres by Draughtsman A. Given that hands and sceptres seem precisely placed and sized to meet the text, it is probably the case that Draughtsman A was stepping in here to resolve an issue where his colleague's somewhat unimaginative response to the text left too much space. The scribe and – initially – the framer expected a larger image here: without the frame and added hand, the 'giant' would be just a small and simple figure surrounded by space. I would, then, see Draughtsman A finding this inadequate or unacceptable, and inserting a detail which provides interest and brings text and image closer. The framer (who may have been one of the draughtsmen) was forced to enhance this effect by pulling the frame back so the added and enlarged hand bursts through to meet the text. Just because Draughtsman A is more skilled than B does not mean he was a master: the grip of the *Sigelwara*'s hand on his sceptre is very awkward. But the intention to supplement and enhance is interesting, as is the apparently regular manner of so doing.

## Colours

Images are always drawn in the brown ink familiar as that used for writing; if there was an earlier sketch or drypoint underlying the ink stage, I have been

64 Similar 'sceptres' appear in several images, which suggests that they were part of the draughtsman's stock collection, used to fill awkward empty hands and parchment. See Figure 15 (the two-headed man, §10), Figure 5 image 2 (the foul woman, §25), and Figure 16, image 2 (the *Sigelwara*, §31). Humanoid figures hold similar sized, often vague and untextual objects in §12, §18, §19, §24, and perhaps §26. Cf. Mittman and Kim, *Inconceivable Beasts*, p. 84 & n. 36 p. 84.

unable to detect any evidence for it.<sup>65</sup> Given the high quality of images made available by the British Library, with the consequent extreme close-ups, it is likely that evidence of a sketch would be detectable at least somewhere, and reasonable therefore to conclude from its absence that, like the framer, the artists were working freehand in ink. This is made more likely by redundant ink lines on, for instance, 99(95) (BL102)r and 99(95) (BL102)v. This was not usual practice for the period: production of images was more usually a careful process of plummet or drypoint sketching followed by the addition of colour with further details added with ink lines, as in the Old English Hexateuch.<sup>66</sup> In Nowell, it is possible that the draughtsmen's freehand approach led them to take greater liberties, which could not then be undone.

Colours were added after images and frames were drawn; those I see being used are listed in Appendix 2. Throughout, the dominant colour is that of the parchment itself, which often forms the main or only colour for the wonders themselves (eleven times out of thirty-one images),<sup>67</sup> and is often the colour used for frames (six times out of twenty-one images with solid frames; the rest have either only lines or no frames). There are usually two or three other colours used in an image, more in the more complex pictures: that for the gold-digging ants of §9 shown in Figure 11, for instance, has at least five colours in addition to brown ink and parchment (black, yellow, orange/red, deep red, and pale blue). The temple of the sun in §24, shown as the second image in Figure 20, is similarly executed in a range of different colours; the council on the mountain (§26; Figure 6) uses several colours for the figures' clothing and hair;<sup>68</sup> and the *Cynocephalus* of §7, shown in Figure 74, is a well-executed and interesting image, where colours show different materials and distinguish between the inner and outer sides of a cloak.<sup>69</sup> However, the majority use fewer

65 Drawing in ink is briefly discussed as a technique by Dormer, 'Drawings'.

66 See e.g. Withers, *Old English Hexateuch*, pp. 26–27. The comparatively diminished effect when this process is not fully completed is evident at e.g. fol. 70v. As shown by the fur on the *lertex* (Figure 21 here), ink lines were sometimes added to add detail to images in Nowell.

67 I have not included here images such as those of the gold-digging ants, where the camels are parchment-based, or the two-headed man who seems to me to be an example of Dormer's Tinted Outline technique rather than purely parchment based.

68 Gale R. Owen-Crocker notes the use of blue for beards and hair, as here, as common Anglo-Saxon practice and indicative of tonal contrast rather than hue, *Dress in Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester, 1986), pp. 134–135.

69 See Olson, *Fair and Varied Forms*, p. 145, and compare Austin, who follows Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, in noting the use of contemporary costume in illustrations, 'Marvelous Peoples', pp. 37–41.

colours; I have counted only nine distinct colours used in the manuscript as a whole, and often only one or two are deployed.<sup>70</sup> This stands in contrast to the consistent colouring in the Old English Hexatuch and to the lavish images of the Tiberius *Wonders* which have won so much praise from modern readers, in which Knock counts 23 distinct colours and tones.<sup>71</sup> It also does not have the confidence of the *Psychomachia* tradition, manuscripts of which usually contain only uncoloured drawings. Like the glorious ink drawings of the Bury and Utrecht Psalters, the lack of colour in the *Psychomachia* sequences enables more vitality and movement in action sequences and more detail in architecture. Neither one thing nor the other, Nowell seems to be aspirational and ambitious but lacking in sophistication and resources.

Relatively limited though they are, the colours are sometimes used very attractively. The eggshell blue of the man's tunic as he carries gold away from the ants in §9, Figure 11, is a fine example of the effects that can be produced even with inexpensive pigments.<sup>72</sup> The blending of red and yellow for the background to the sheep of §2 in Figure 13, and the golden hue produced as a background for the two strange creatures of §6 on 96(98) (BL99)v are both rich and attractive.<sup>73</sup> The effect of using uncoloured images against coloured backgrounds is employed repeatedly: the most obvious instances are both sheep on the first page of the text, but other examples are the *olfenda* ("camels"), §10 in Figure 9, the aged shepherd and monstrous man of §12–14 shown in Figure 21, the *Blemmya* of §15, the *Donestre* and his victim of §20, and the *Panotus* of §21 – these last three shown together in Figure 19.<sup>74</sup> These last three all use the same dark red background which provides the starkest contrast with parchment, but which is also most likely to stain the facing page. The thickness with which the

70 I have not included clearly variant shades of the same pigment. Where shades are so different in quality as to suggest they may have been mixed from different sources, such as the orange/red and deep red in the gold-digging ants image, I have counted them separately. Inevitably, some subjectivity is involved in this process; a record of the colours I see appearing in each image is included in Appendix 2.

71 *Illustrated Miscellany*, pp. 38–39. She includes colour variations, such as light and dark green.

72 By contrast, see Knock who describes the colours as "insipid", *Synoptic Edition*, p. 63.

73 Although compare Gameson, who sees yellow and orange as "(poor) substitutes for gold", 'Material Fabric', p. 91.

74 The text does not name the *Blemmya* (headless man with a face in his chest) *Panotus* (man with long ears), or the Centaur; I have followed Friedman in using the terms for convenience, 'Marvels-of-the-East', p. 324. Knock observes that the lack of Greek names in the text suggests that the earliest versions may not have been Greek, *Synoptic Edition*, pp. 27–28.





FIGURE 19 *Effective use of colour and parchment in the Blemmya on 99(95) (BL102)v, Donestre and his victim on 100(96) (BL103)v, and less vividly for the Panotus on 101 (BL104)r. See also colour plate 8.*

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red paint has been applied means that strokes are frequently visible, and it was not easy for the artist to achieve the consistency of intensity he seems to have wanted: in the *Panotus* image, the background behind the figure's right ear and along the right hand side of the plants was clearly added first, with the rest a pale, scratchier imitation of the intensity behind the *Blemmya*.

As in the much finer work on the New Minster's *Liber Vitae* illustration of Cnut and Emma, colour is sometimes used to pick out key details, as on the two headed man of §11 shown in Figure 15; the *Blemmya*'s eyebrows and moustache and centaur's bracelets, the first image in 3.15; some clothing for both priest and the shining eyed man on 101 (BL104)v in Figure 20, the bearded woman's hair and the shadow of her right arm of §26 in 5, and what can be seen of the woman's hair and lips of §30, shown as the second image in 27.<sup>75</sup> The bearded woman image, in fact, provides an interesting instance of the artist's awareness of a contrast between presence and absence of colour. This was certainly of interest to eleventh-century artists, who were exploring different ways of using colour and ink to illustrate form.<sup>76</sup> On fol. 23v of the Old English Hexateuch, static features (tents and a building) are coloured, where animals and most humans are not. This may indicate a sense of what I suggested above

75 This last is interesting as a rare instance of a woman's hair not being hidden (discussed by Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, pp. 141–144) and may be suggestive of the sexual nature of the gift, or of the woman's wildness.

76 Discussed by Dormer, 'Drawings', who identifies Coloured Outline, Tinted Outline, and Shadowed Outline, and whose discussion of St. Augustine's *Philosophy* (in Cambridge, Trinity College Library MS O. 3. 7 (1179), fol. 1) could be read in part as a description of this hunting woman. Temple, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, posits the Leofric Missal (Bodley 579) as the earliest example of coloured outline, c. 970.



FIGURE 20 101 (BL104)v, with the shining eyed man and priest in his temple.

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in relation to one advantage of ink drawings: uncoloured images tend to have more vitality, so the living and moving parts of these pictures have not been painted. In Nowell, given the challenges in execution, it was over-ambitious to show both the woman with her hunting gear and the wild animal on its mountain.<sup>77</sup> The resultant illustration has a coloured section, with the woman extending her left arm and holding what is presumably some kind of weapon into an otherwise uncoloured smaller section containing an animal.<sup>78</sup> The 'wild' part of the image has been rotated through 90°, presumably because the 'wild animal' archetype (which also forms the basis of the *Catinii* later in the manuscript) was all Draughtsman A had available, and – being longer than it is tall – would not have fitted in the remaining space. Despite its limitations, this is an interesting attempt to contrast two worlds: it implies that the bearded woman is as distinct from the wild beasts as the reader is from her and that not all 'wonders' can be placed in the same absolute category. This arguably stands, along with the ant-camel image, as an instance of design being stronger and more interesting than execution in these images. A similar shortcoming can be seen in the Old English Hexateuch, where the conception of images such as Noah's Ark on fol. 15v is admirable, but the forcing of so many ideas into one image leaves more a sense of jarring styles and a general impression of chaos than clear storytelling; similarly, the set of golden rings on fol. 91v that are perhaps intended to show the Egyptians or their chariots were clearly carefully conceived but are difficult to 'read'.

In places in Nowell, the colourist misunderstands what Draughtsman A has drawn: he paints the front camel's leg in §10, Figure 9, and, as shown in Figure 21, he confuses the clothes of a shepherd and the extended ears of its sheep-like beast in §14.<sup>79</sup> As often in this codex, errors are revealing: while certainty is impossible, it follows that the colourist was probably not Draughtsman A, but he could have been Draughtsman B, or the scribe, or the framer, or all three. Colour is sometimes poorly applied and there is a general movement from early rich and glowing images to sparseness later in the text. As is shown by the two images in Figure 20, pages often (and particularly later in the text) use the same palette as others on that page. In this particular instance, the colourist seems to have done a delicate and fine job on the outside parts of the priest's

77 Mittman and Kim, *Inconceivable Beasts*, p. 93, fairly persuasively, see it as the beast she uses to hunt *with*: my disagreement with them is based solely on what I read as the deliberate foreignness of its setting. For James, the image fails completely: he calls her "very absurd", *Marvels of the East*, p. 58.

78 Both Mittman and Kim and James read her as feeding the beast.

79 I am indebted to Susan Irvine for this observation.



FIGURE 21 *The shepherd, Lertex with extended ears and Hostes on 99(95) (BL102)r.*

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temple, but then to have stopped.<sup>80</sup> The image is, as a result, unbalanced: pattern and colour are broadly symmetrical, with some uncoloured sections disrupting the design. It may have been the case that the colours ran out, leaving the colourist with the choice of highlighting in red or doing nothing for the last few pages. Or possibly the final images were produced in a rush, leaving too little time for colour to be added. This proposed movement towards weakness, or incompleteness, in the final pages is a little disrupted by §31's tree on the last side, but it is reasonable to imagine that the three trees were coloured at the same time. As shown in Figure 22, the impression of a set amount of red / orange pigment being produced for this project is reinforced by the opportunistic colouring of some capital letters early in *Alexander*, which follows *Wonders* in the manuscript. A limited amount of colour, produced specifically for this manuscript and used with profligacy in the early images, continues to make it seem as though this copy of *Wonders* was produced in a scriptorium with ambitions somewhat in excess of its experience and capacity, and perhaps with some haste.

80 Compare the tents and roof on fol. 23v of the Old English Hexateuch. There was clearly no lack of time here, given the fully coloured tent stripes, but, more than half-way through the job, the decorator gave up on adding swirls to the tents and tiles to the roof.



FIGURE 22

*Some coloured capitals early in Alexander, on 104 (BL107)<sup>r</sup> and 105 (BL108)<sup>v</sup>. See also colour plate 9.*

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All of the difficulties in planning text, image, frames, and colours make it almost certain that an exemplar was not being replicated. The various hands seem to have an idea of the general direction of their work without knowing precisely what they are producing. I will therefore move on to consider the planning of images in the text before a final consideration of possible exemplars.

### The Planning and Control of the Images

The image spaces were certainly pre-planned: on occasion, Scribe A assumes space is needed for an illustration which is then not used. On 99(101) (BL102) <sup>r</sup>, as shown in Figure 29, the scribe was so loath to intrude on the image space that *beoð*, which could comfortably at the end of line 4, is written at the start of line 5. Indeed, five of the nine lines of text to the left of the drawing end with relatively large amounts of space. The scribe was clearly concerned about having enough space for text, as he starts a new section with a marginal capital on the very last line of this side. He could have saved at least a manuscript line by utilising these gaps, and certainly had no qualms about text abutting and even, occasionally, crossing into an image. But he leaves the space, expecting it to be filled. The draughtsmen did not need the whole space, and the framer chose to bring the left edge of his frame close in to the image, so a gap is left. On occasion, details of the images are so well designed to fill the space coincidentally left by letter shapes that they must have been drawn second: as shown in Figure 23, protruding feet sometimes neatly occupy the spaces left by letters without ascenders.

It is equally clear that the text was not always written before the image. The unframed ant-camel image of §9 was drawn before the text underneath it was written. There are five ruled lines beneath it. However, Draughtsman A seems

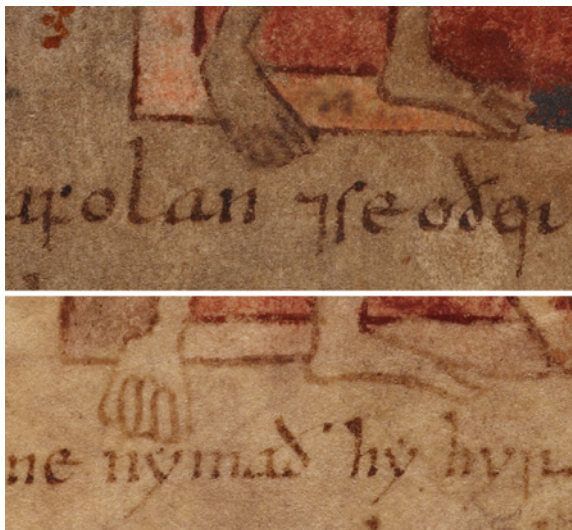


FIGURE 23 *Protruding feet of the Donestre, §20, on 100(96) (BL103)v and the Panotus, §21, on 101 (BL104)r.*

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here not to have understood that a ruled line of text needs a fairly significant amount of space above it to be used for writing (suggestive, though far from conclusive, evidence that he was not himself a scribe). The feet of his stylized tree extend close to the ruled line. As shown in Figure 24, when he wrote below it, Scribe A had to compress the *d* of *londbunis* which is much smaller and closer to bilinear than his usual, taller and concave-down, form shown in Figure 2. That some images were drawn before the text, and some after, makes it certain that Scribe A and the draughtsmen were working in the same place and at more or less the same time: the draughtsmen worked on some pages while the scribe worked on others. It cannot usually be deduced which out of image and text came first, but it is useful to have conclusive evidence that both sequences did indeed take place, at different times. It is suggestive that the ant-camel image is the only one certainly drawn before the scribe worked on the page. Possibly, here was the only time this sequence held. If so, such may have been because the image was an innovation – perhaps, as the longest narrative of the text, the section attracted particular attention.<sup>81</sup>

81 Day 4 of the twelfth-century sunshine prognostics in Hatton 115, fols. 149v–150r, were certainly influenced by this section of *Wonders*, as shown by Chardonnens, ‘Exotic Sheep’, pp. 141–144.



FIGURE 24 *Compressed d in londbunis underneath the ants and gold image on 98(100) (BL101)r.*

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As we have seen, it is also worth remembering that Scribe A's regard for image space is not consistent. As in the two-headed snake example, his text seems to spill over the ends of pages and into what should be image spaces, certainly at 96(98) (BL99)r and 98(100) (BL101)r. This can be contrasted with later images, such as that of the giant, where he is nervous about approaching the image space and a gap between text and frame results. Given that the scribe and draughtsman were working together, it is plausible that the scribe worked on these pages and handed them over, that the draughtsman complained about the interference with his image space, and that the scribe subsequently worked harder to maintain the boundaries (which, as it turns out, the draughtsman did not always need after all). Such a sequence of events is merely a speculative reconstruction, but makes sense of the shifts in behaviour indicated by the evidence. Given that he steps in to improve Draughtsman B's work in at least two sites and was directly copied by his less skilled colleague in at least two others, Draughtsman A looks increasingly like a senior and controlling figure, at least in the production of this text.

To return to the main thread, given that the image spaces were pre-planned, it would be understandable if there were a relatively consistent layout. The text gestures towards this. Each section starts on a new line and with a marginal capital.<sup>82</sup> Particularly in the first half of the text, marginal capitals are usually placed in line with the top of an image frame. The most frequent layout is to place two wonders on each page, each with an accompanying image,

82 In the Old English Hexateuch, it is likely that capitals were drawn before images and frames, given that they intrude on image space and frames are drawn around them on fols. 9r, 9v, 12v, and 19v. Given the more ambitious inset placement of most images in Nowell, this disruption does not happen and the sequence of activity is less clear.



surrounded on three sides by text, as shown in Figure 25.<sup>83</sup> However, this ‘default’ design only appears on seven of the seventeen pages of *Wonders*. The variation mostly results from the significantly different length of textual sections, but also from the decision to have differently sized images.<sup>84</sup> An added complication is that some sections describe more than one wonder, although of course there is scope for the production team to decide not to illustrate every element, or to bring different creatures into a single image. As a result of all of this inconsistency, three pages add an extra image between my spaces i and ii; two pages enlarge one of the images to occupy the full width of the page; three have only one illustration; and two consecutive sides are anomalous, with 97(99) (BL100)v unillustrated and the facing side, 98(100) (BL101)r, having one large picture. This combination may have been carefully chosen: it means

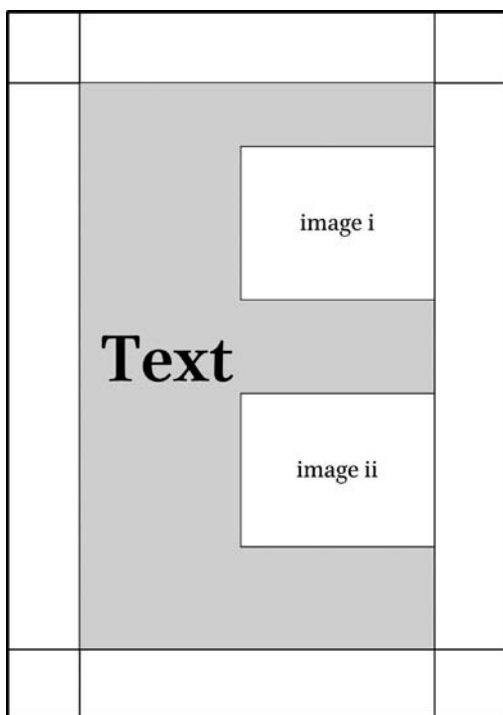


FIGURE 25  
‘Default’ design for each side in  
*Wonders*.

83 I am here following Gameson’s presentation of page layout as used in ‘Material Fabric’, Figure 2.17. Of the schemes he identifies, Nowell is closest to his ‘C’, which he describes as “less complicated” but also “less popular”, p. 70.

84 As noted by Olson, “there is little consistency in the size of the illustrations”, *Fair and Varied Forms*, p. 133.



that the open book resembles the 'default' layout, with an image to the right of the text.<sup>85</sup> Sometimes, text-space is reduced because the images are larger, or laid out 'portrait' rather than 'landscape'. The most striking example of this is on 102 (BL105)v, Figure 5, where the two images of women leave so little space that only one line of text can cross the full width of the page.<sup>86</sup>

### Variant Styles; Multiple Exemplars

Some aspects of the images seem to be drawn from a very basic group of archetypes. The shape of the giant man seems to be a set pattern for Draughtsman B, with an apparently default collar with right angles used for both him, the *Panotus* (third figure in Figure 19), the Bearded Woman (Figure 5, top), and the *Sigelwara* in the text's final image (Figure 16). The *Sigelwara* is striped with faint lines, possibly indicating his blackness or perhaps a hairy wildness. That the collar is a set pattern is clear because the *Panotus* and giant man are both apparently naked, with the same sets of short lines on their chests suggestive of ribs or perhaps connected with the mention of seven breasts in §12. It is interesting that a similar collar is used for Adam on fols. 4r and 7r of the Old English Hexateuch, with a more curved form on fol. 6v. It may, then, indicate nakedness. The *Donestre* of §20 (Figure 19, second image), on the verso facing the *Panotus*, has his nakedness indicated by exposed genitalia; the same may be true of the final small figure outside the *Sigelwara*'s frame, and there is perhaps something being exposed by the woman being eaten by the *Donestre*: the shape of her flowing skirts is suggestive without being exactly genital.<sup>87</sup> All of these figures, along with the foul woman of §27 (second image of Figure 5) and the seated man on the facing page (Figure 6, first image), have their arms in the same configuration: one outstretched and often holding something; the other bent at the elbow and across the body in a fairly redundant gesture, with nothing of the drama Draughtsman A can achieve with the *Hostes* reaching out across the *Lertex* (Figure 21) or the men of §30 bidding farewell to one

85 Knock argues for a repeated breakdown of the planned sequence in Nowell in *Illustrated Miscellany*, p. 96.

86 Compare frequently overcrowded pages in the Old English Hexateuch, such as fol. 19v where the image spaces are large and there is space for only two lines of (original) text at the top, one between the first and second frames, and another between second and third.

87 As is often discussed, Tiberius' images are often obviously naked. For the most recent discussion of the *Blemmya*'s crotch and its implications, see, Barajas, 'Reframing the Monstrous', pp. 253–254 and refs.



FIGURE 26 *The singing Centaur on 99(95) (BL102)v.*

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another (Figure 27). Many of Draughtsman B's figures face away from the text with no attempt at interacting with it in the way I have suggested is significant in some images.

An exception to this is the image of the Centaur of §17, Figure 26. The shape of his face shows that he must be the work of the same draughtsman as the two men in conversation at the council and the wise man. Yet he has his arms outstretched and mouth open, singing directly at the text, his mouth a convincing shape some distance from that of the bearded and foul women, whose compressed faces make nose and mouth together look almost like snouts.<sup>88</sup> His nose, though more clearly separated from his mouth, is inelegantly worked into his forehead: the illustration is no masterpiece. But it is curious. The text describes the creature as *homodubii*, which receives a translation in Tiberius: "þæt býð tpylice" (fol. 82v: "that is, doubtful ones"). Nowell has "þ beoð .", omitting *tpylice* rather inexplicably and replacing it with a point, which may indicate that the scribe recognised an omission.<sup>89</sup> Either way, the creature described by the text is timid, fleeing from humans, and has "lange sconcan spa fugelas" ("long legs like birds"). Neither attribute is recognisable in the image.

88 This archetype is rather similar to that used for faces in the Valenciennes 412 copy of the *Psychomachia* on e.g. fols. 35v and 36v.

89 Scribe A's apparent habit of inserting a point where text is missing is discussed further in Chapter 4.



FIGURE 27 Two contrasting images for the generous men, §30, on 103 (BL106) r & v.

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Here, the Centaur stands with arms outstretched, rendering it open to – even aggressive towards – the text. It wears bracelets which suggest a degree of civilisation or trade certainly not implied by the description, and has somewhat squat legs fitting the text's description of its body as having the "eoseles gelicnesse" ("likeness of a donkey"). The text does not suggest that they sing or declaim, but attributes them with "lipelice stefne" ("a soft voice"). This follows the mention of legs like birds, and could be taken to thereby connote some musicality.<sup>90</sup> The corresponding image in Tiberius is also reaching out, but has a firmly closed mouth. Its large body has very thin legs, which may be an attempt to illustrate their bird-like nature, and it carries a piece of wood which may perhaps be intended to suggest an instrument. For both illustrators, then, it may well have simply been the case that the combination of features (human shape to the navel, ass' body, legs like birds, and a soft voice) proved impossible to draw and what results is a little difficult to tie directly to what is written. But this does not account for the striking stance taken by the creature in Nowell, particularly as the posed arms and open mouth are not echoed in other images. This pose has a striking resemblance to the Centaurs drawn in the Bayeux Tapestry, and it is probable that it was drawn more directly from a model which gave a shape to follow than Draughtsman B's other images, which tend towards a degree of repetitiveness and lack of imagination.<sup>91</sup>

90 For the perception of birds as producers of sound in Anglo-Saxon England, see Eric Lacey, 'Birds and Words: Aurality, Semantics and Species in Anglo-Saxon England', *Sensory Perception*, eds. Thomson and Bintley (2016), 75–98, esp. pp. 83–85, 88.

91 Cyril Hart, 'The Bayeux Tapestry and Schools of Illumination at Canterbury', *Anglo-Norman Studies xxii: Proceedings of the Battle Conference 1999*, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill

Further, there are a number of clear indications that some images did not come directly from a single exemplar. First, there are two illustrations for one wonder: §30's generous men who give visitors women to take away are shown on recto and verso of 103 (BL106), Figure 27 here. The first image shows two men saying farewell; the second shows a man, presumably a visitor, carrying a woman away with him. Even with the top of the second image and the right hand side of the first missing, it is clear that they are drawn in different styles. The first has a divided frame, like that deployed for the bearded woman and her hunting animals, and recognisably Anglo-Saxon clothes including pointed shoes that seem to curl up at the tip. In style, the figures are close to the third figure in §25's council on the mountain, and to §23's priest in his temple on 101 (BL104)v. By contrast, the second image, with the woman being carried away, uses lines to suggest decorated and flowing garments. Rocks provide a floor for the man to stand on, and neither figure has shoes. What can be seen of the woman's face is drawn with the same straight lines and angles used in the preceding image. The first illustration has coloured clothes with blank parchment background; the second a lightly tinted background and no colour for the clothes. In short, as well as unnecessarily providing two images for one section, the two images look to have different archetypes for male clothing, although I would (cautiously) attribute them both to Draughtsman A.

This variation in style persists throughout the text.<sup>92</sup> The council on the mountain gives three different men, shown in the central row of Figure 28. At the right of a stylized table is the figure noted above, whose face is made of straight lines and angles; in the centre and on the left are two more figures drawn completely differently, and whose difference seems to be recognised by the colourist. They share the elongated nose, bulging chin, and prominent eyebrows also given to the bearded huntress and the *Lertex*'s shepherd of §14, shown in Figure 21 and the first face in the top left of Figure 28. In this single image, the shepherd's face is utterly at odds with that of §13's *Hostes*, which it faces. It is expressionistic and dominated by a single eye; lines continue from its clothing into its neck, suggesting gaunt, stretched flesh.<sup>93</sup> Other details,

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(Woodbridge, 2000), 117–168, at p. 136 and Figure 12, p. 140; Carola Hicks, 'The Borders of the Bayeux Tapestry', *England in the Eleventh Century*, ed. Hicks (1992), 251–265; Hicks, *Animals*, p. 255. Cf. Ford, *Marvels and Artefact* pp. 19–24 who reviews Hicks' argument and demonstrates the sustained use of this iconography in the Icelandic *Physiologi*.

92 Though this is not as remarkable as might be thought: as Gameson notes, "variant styles[...]regularly coexist", 'Scribes and Scriptoria', p. 111.

93 James calls him "[a]n absurd man, with a staff", *Marvels of the East*, p. 55.



FIGURE 28 *Different faces, flipped and resized for comparison, l–r and top to bottom, shepherd and Hostes (99(95) (BL102)r); priest in his temple (101 (BL104)v); the three figures at the council on the mountain (102 (BL105)r); bearded woman (102 (BL105)v); seated man and generous man (both on 103 (BL106)r). See also colour plate 10.*

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such as the crook, the hand holding it, and both feet, seem rapidly drawn in to supplement this craning head. He is dressed in a belted tunic, with lines showing the bulge of his belly. The figure facing it from the other side of the frame wears a full-length black robe, with no texturing to the material. The fat sausages of the shepherd's fingers are a world away from the *Hostes'* elegantly shaped outstretched right hand and the left hand, just about visible where it holds a human leg, has a realistic grasp which could hardly be less like the crook, drawn in around the shepherd's hand with no particular interest in showing how the two are linked. The *Hostes'* face is from another school. Gone are the shepherd's distorted, expressive features, replaced by a small, neat face on a clean and upright throat. The animal between them shows a third style. It is one of the "wildeor þa hatton lertices" ("wild animals that are called *Lertices*"). Coloured a uniform golden yellow (apart from its ears which the colourist assumed to be part of the shepherd's clothing), with pen markings showing the

texture of its wool, the animal feels like a moment from a tapestry; something static and two-dimensional placed into a frame. The attempt at huge talons adds to this sense of flat illustration.<sup>94</sup> Possibly the variations in style could be linked with the variations in quality discussed above, and attributed to different artists: if so, the two hands collaborated on a large number of images.

This composite image comes at the end of a two-page spread, shown as Figure 29, which is thoroughly confused in layout.<sup>95</sup> The mistakes, and the rather drastic steps taken to ameliorate them, are further evidence that the image scheme was being freshly created for this copy of the text.<sup>96</sup> The clear intention in *Wonders* is to connect text with the relevant image. This was already difficult by the end of the second side, with a full manuscript line at the end of §4 having to be moved to the first line of 96(98) (BL99)v, intruding in the planned image space. However, by the start of the double spread of 98(100) (BL100)v–99(95) (BL102)r, the alignment of text and image has fallen



FIGURE 29 Confused open book spread, 98(100) (BL101)v–99(95) (BL102)r. See also colour plate n.

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94 This is one of not many examples that I can find to support Friedman's estimation of the illustrations as "like curious statues on display", 'Marvels-of-the-East', p. 324. The image is actually very similar, apart from the length of ears, to the *Lertex* in Tiberius, on fol. 82r.

95 I am indebted to Susan Irvine for her observations on the difficulty of this double page.

96 Cf. McGurk *et al.*, *Illustrated Miscellany*, pp. 96 & n. 20 p. 96.

apart completely and only comes back into line through some artistic innovation. On the first side, two image spaces illustrate §10 and §11, beside the text for §11 and §12 respectively. The next page contains the rest of §12, §13 and §14, and the start of §15. Next to §13, which describes the cannibalistic *Hostes*, is an illustration of a long-haired naked man holding a sceptre (the 'giant' discussed above). This may be an attempt to illustrate §12, given the statement that the people are "monu spa leona heafdu" ("maned like lions' heads"); possibly the foliage is a response to the text's obscure "hȳ habbað micelne muð spa fon" ("they have a great mouth like a fan"), illustrating the fan rather than the mouth. On the other hand, the man has seven lines beneath his prominent breasts, which could be a response to the "sidan mid breostum seofon | fota lange" ("sides with breasts seven | foot long") attributed to the *Hostes* in §13, the text of which is beside the image. Perhaps the manuscript line break after the number may have inspired the seven lines of 'breast'. The same set of lines recurs in the *Panotus* of §21, so it may be an archetype for nakedness, possibly showing ribs. Or the image may even be a creative attempt to bring in features of both of these alarming giant men.<sup>97</sup>

The *Hostes* is certainly shown in the second picture on the page: a dark figure with a bestial head, holding a human leg to demonstrate its cannibalism.<sup>98</sup> Here, it has been integrated into the image for §14, the sheep-like *Lertex*. In order to balance the humanoid figure towering over the animal, the expressive shepherd has been added to the picture with no textual basis. It is likely that this second, dark-clothed, *Hostes* was based on that in an exemplar, because the detail of its blackness is omitted from the Nowell text. The draughtsmen of the Nowell *Wonders*, in order to rebalance the confused image scheme, seem to have integrated the illustrations for §12 and §13, and those for §13 and §14, then to have recognised the aesthetic imbalance this created in §14 and added an additional figure. That the extra-textual shepherd is drawn from a different archetype than the *Hostes* suggests that it was either from a different exemplar altogether, or from the artist's mind; either conclusion places it alongside the similarly conceived figures which appear elsewhere in the text as not from the same exemplar as the *Hostes* and related figures. And that such confusion in the alignment of text and image occurs on this double page is interesting. It comes immediately after the large ant-camel image which is the only image in *Wonders* certainly drawn before the text was written, has no analogue in

97 Compare Tiberius, fol. 81v, where the separate images are side by side and very similar. The image has confused most readers; see McGurk *et al.*, *Illustrated Miscellany*, n. 20 p. 96.

98 A human leg is also used to emblematised the cannibalism of the *Donestre*, §20, on 100(96) (BL103)v.

the other versions of the text, and may well be original to Nowell. The double page reinforces the impressions of different exemplars, creative freedom for the draughtsmen, and a struggle in the making of this illustrated work.

### Suggestions

Far from 'ludicrous', the images in *Wonders* are interesting and informative despite, and sometimes because of, their weaknesses. There was clearly more than one hand at work on the text. This demonstrates the communal nature of the project that made the Nowell Codex, and the investment of time, energy, and resources that it required. The planning of images may reasonably be described as sophisticated, and the overall design extremely ambitious, but the scheme exceeded the capacity of scribe and draughtsmen. The flaws in execution should not allow us to ignore the ambition of the design. A scriptorium capable of planning for this book, devoting human resources to it, and capable of bringing more than one exemplar of *Wonders* together with the religious and heroic exemplars for the rest of the codex, must have been ambitious and resourceful.

The mistakes which the team made in executing the design indicate some areas of significance for understanding of the codex as a whole. First, there is a second draughtsman working with less skill and sometimes operating physically behind the main artist. This placement provides an intriguing (though not precise) parallel with the two scribes and moves us towards imagining the codex being produced in a relatively large scriptorium where there were sufficient resources to bring two exemplars together in order to produce a secular text in the vernacular with coloured illustrations and, moreover, to use it to some extent as a training ground; or to a well-planned secular project for which human and material resources were carefully assembled. Second, Scribe A, who writes a relatively new hand with confidence, exhibits considerable inexperience in shaping his text around the planned image spaces and seems to be uncertain enough to vary his behaviour based, perhaps, on feedback. Third, there are indications that this copy of *Wonders* was innovating with its source materials and that these innovations caused certain challenges in its production. We get a strong impression of a project conceived with ambition and executed to the best of its producers' limited abilities. In turn, this tells us of experimentation, perhaps a learning experience, or more likely (given the evidence suggesting hasty completion) an over-ambitious commission. Any or all of these scenarios provide a more sure base for encountering the codex than a baseline of inaccuracy and incompetence, and set the ground for more detailed discussion of the scribes' work in Chapters 4 and 5.



## Scribe A's Performance

Scribe A copied the three prose texts and the first two-thirds of *Beowulf*, forming the opening and the bulk of the extant Nowell Codex. Just as past assessments of the images in *Wonders* have depended on Sisam's judgement that they were drawn by one hand, and that must have been the scribe's, so past assessments of Scribe A's work have often depended on Kiernan's judgement that he did not engage with the prose texts to the same degree as he did with *Beowulf*.<sup>1</sup> This is not how I read the evidence, and some space has to be taken here to defend the scribe's work on the prose texts and argue that it stands alongside his work on the poem – which is not to suggest that it is exemplary. This chapter opens, therefore, with an argument that Scribe A's versions of the prose texts are at least as well-transcribed as the text of *Beowulf*. It moves on to considering corrections made during the copying process. These seem significant as evidence of what the producers of a text thought it ought to look like. Corrections, far more than the errors we perceive or the body of the text (which may have been written with little thought or engagement), show conscious decision-making.<sup>2</sup> Contrary to Kiernan, I find that Scribe A expended as much effort on correcting the prose texts as he did *Beowulf*. Although this does not mean that any of the texts are remotely ideal, it does suggest that they were all equally significant to him. I also consider indications of attempts to adjust the density of copying in *Beowulf*; that is, adjustments in the number of half-lines recorded on each page of the manuscript. This is less certain, as the ideal towards which the scribe is working has to be recreated speculatively by analysing his activity. Nonetheless, there are indications of his attempting to bring his work into line with an overall vision for how much text should fit into each gathering.

Next, I consider other indications of Scribe A's conscious engagement with exemplars, texts, and perhaps with his readers. I consider the distribution of capital forms, finding indications that he uses capitals to interpret the text; and I consider the form of marginal capitals, suggesting that these indicate imitation of exemplar forms. Considering the variation between the possible exemplars further, I review Scribe A's *explicits* and *incipits*. Finally, I argue that *Beowulf* has some scribal features that the other texts do not, as a response to

<sup>1</sup> Sisam, 'Compilation', p. 78; Kiernan, *Beowulf* Manuscript, e.g. pp. 141–142.

<sup>2</sup> See also S.C. Thomson, 'Scribes, Sources, and Readers: Using a Digital Edition to Develop Understanding of the *Beowulf* Manuscript', *Poetica* 83 (2015), 59–77.

its poetic form. The aim of the present chapter is to render a relatively consistent narrative out of disparate and challenging pieces of evidence. I find that Scribe A knew what he was working on; that the Nowell Codex was deliberately produced, and therefore probably conceived of, as a drawing together of diverse traditions; and that, therefore, when placed into this codex, *Beowulf* was expected to be read in the context of the works around it.

### The Value of the Nowell Codex's Prose Texts

It is indisputable that the prose texts of the Nowell Codex have a number of significant errors. It is important, however, to distinguish between errors made by Scribe A (which certainly exist) and differences between the Nowell Codex texts and ideal version of those texts which exist in readers' minds. The most frequently criticised copying is that of *Wonders*, which is easiest to critique as there is a near-contemporary version with which to compare it. Scribe A's text is often found wanting in comparison with that in Tiberius B. v. The latter is longer: it has four additional short sections at the end followed by the apocryphal story of Jamnes and Mambres, and adds minor details at other points. As a result, editions of *Wonders* usually rely on Tiberius: both Fulk and Orchard do so despite a primary interest in the Nowell Codex. Fulk suggests that Scribe A "frequently shortened" his text, and that his version shows a "lack of care" caused perhaps by his "faltering interest" in the text.<sup>3</sup> In this, Fulk probably follows Kiernan who argues for Scribe A's "manifest lack of interest in the prose texts, which he [...] did not bother to proofread".<sup>4</sup> There is no evidence that such shortening is indicative of either carelessness or disinterest. Indeed, it makes little sense that both Kiernan and Fulk find Scribe A to be deliberately changing his text, and then find him to be uncaring about it. A scribe who acts as an editor, and who makes active decisions about exclusions cannot be regarded as unengaged, though the occasional sites where his text does not make sense show that he did not always exert himself to produce a consistently readable edition.<sup>5</sup>

In any case, as it is generally agreed that 'Jamnes and Mambres' is probably an addition to Tiberius, it seems likely that Scribe A did not have this text available to him to exclude.<sup>6</sup> The exclusion of the four other short sections could

3 Fulk, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, pp. xi and xii.

4 Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, p. 193.

5 I have discussed different types of scribal editing of texts in "Whistle While You Work".

6 See, most comprehensively, Frederick M. Biggs and Thomas N. Hall, 'Traditions concerning Jamnes and Mambres in Anglo-Saxon England', *ASE* 25 (1996), 69–89, esp. pp. 71–74 which include brief consideration of the Nowell Codex.

be attributed to lack of space, which would certainly indicate some degree of scribal carelessness or failure of planning. Few readers will miss yet another set of wondrous plants, or another mountain full of dark-skinned people; it is arguable that these have been dropped because they are repetitive. However, the exclusion of a griffin and a phoenix are less easily accounted for, and it does not seem likely that anyone would deliberately cut them out of a catalogue of marvellous things. It is possible to construe this as evidence that the scribe planned poorly, ran out of space, and then, since he was already committed to producing *Alexander* and *Beowulf*, knew he could not use yet more pages on this well-known catalogue (though the attribution of these decisions to the scribe is itself problematic without clearer evidence). However, the most probable collation has *Wonders* end in a short gathering of three bifolia, most likely because the text took up less space than anticipated. Further, it is almost certain that the spaces for the images of *Wonders* were planned (but mostly not filled) before the text was written. There are no spare frames in the pages as they stand, and no evidence of image frames in the folios containing *Alexander*. If a decision was made to not use one or two sheets originally intended for *Wonders*, they would have been taken from the outside of the gathering, so any decision to exclude these sections must have been made at least by the time the scribe completed what is now gathering 2, ending with 100(96) (BL103)v. This does not seem particularly likely, given a number of instances where we see both scribes reacting to difficulties in much smaller spaces of time. Scribe B only seems to realise that he has too much text at the end of *Beowulf* when he is about three sides away from finishing the text. So such editorial oversight of *Wonders* is conceivable, but not likely: it is easier to assume that the commissioner of the Nowell Codex never intended Scribe A to include the long couch, the griffin, the phoenix, and the fiery mountain full of dark-skinned people in this text and that this makes in turn makes it probable that they were not in the exemplars.<sup>7</sup>

Knock points out that, given this difference between the texts alongside the preservation of some older linguistic forms in Nowell, Tiberius and Nowell probably represent different strains of the tradition altogether.<sup>8</sup> In this context, it is worth briefly noting one of the textual variations. The first illustration on 98(100) (BL100)v shows camels rather than elephants. All other versions have, in §10 or its equivalent, elephants (OE *ylpenda*) being born in this land: Nowell has *ofenda* ("camels"). As well as including them in the text, Tiberius and Bodley both illustrate elephants. That Nowell shows camels in both picture and text demonstrates that this image was introduced after the textual

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Knock, *Synoptic Edition*, pp. 103–104.

<sup>8</sup> See *Synoptic Edition*, esp. pp. 57 & 100–110.

corruption. That is, we are not viewing here a debased version of a text, but a version so far divided from the other witnesses that some, at least, of Nowell's images post-date the separation. Given that (as argued in Chapter 3) Nowell was probably based on two distinct exemplars of the text and therefore itself made somewhere with some interest in the *Wonders* tradition, this complete separation may enhance the likelihood that it was produced some distance from Canterbury, in turn supplementing the fragile indications of Anglian production discussed in Chapter 2.

Either way, Nowell's abbreviated text of *Wonders* cannot be taken as evidence that Scribe A was careless about what he was copying. Whether by coincidence or by design, the ending of the text certainly fits its context, with two references to Alexander the Great in the last six sections, including a mention of his nobility on the page facing the start of *Alexander*. The abbreviated ending of the translation of *Alexander* could be drawn into this context. As noted in Chapter 1, unlike the Anglo-Saxon Latin *Epistola Alexandri* in Royal 13 A. i, the Nowell translation ends after the Trees of the Sun and Moon have predicted Alexander's death. The *Epistola* goes on to detail Alexander's further campaigns and encounters with monsters: material that would fit in well with the Nowell Codex's suggested interest in the monstrous or indeed in kingship. However, no editors have suggested that Scribe A has accidentally left material out here. The general agreement is that the ending, as it stands in the Nowell Codex, is effective and dramatic, whether it was determined by the scribe or (more likely) his exemplar. It certainly results in interesting resonances with the other texts, particularly *Beowulf* to whose opening (facing it in the open book) it provides a dramatic contrast. Like the apparently missing material at the end of *Wonders*, if there has been a mistake here it has been serendipitous and made a collection of disparate pieces more coherent.

More convincing as evidence of the weakness of the Nowell *Wonders* are numerous minor omissions within the text Scribe A has copied. These have been widely discussed, but it is worth examining in detail the three exclusions that consist of more than a word or two. These are:

1. the location of the two-headed snakes on 96(98) (BL99)v.4–6, where Tiberius adds:

Hallescentia hatte þæt land, þonne mon to Babilonia færð, þæt is þonne ðæs læssan mil-getæles þa stadia hatte .ix. mile lang 7 brad; þæt bugeð to Meda rice. Þæt land is ealum godum gefylled.<sup>9</sup>

9 Quotations from Tiberius are taken from Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, with reference to his textual notes.

*Hallescentia is the name of that country, if one is travelling to Babylon, which in the lesser measure called stadia is nine long and wide; it submits to the kingdom of the Medes. That land is filled with all good things...*

2. the dark colour of the *Hostes* on 99(95) (BL102)v.3–12, where Tiberius adds:

Hi beoð sweartes hiwes 7 ...

*They are black of colour, and...*

3. the men who rule from the mountains on 102 (BL105)r.4–9, where Tiberius adds:

Pær syndon gedefelice menn þa habbað him...

*There are honourable men who hold...*

In each instance it is possible to follow Kiernan and Fulk in finding Scribe A to have been clumsy, failing to control his text.<sup>10</sup> The alternative hypothesis would be that these details were all missing from his exemplar or that the scribe made conscious decisions to exclude them.<sup>11</sup>

The illustrative scheme for the two-headed snakes in §5 required an image stretching across the whole page. As shown in Figure 18, the scribe had intruded into the image space by writing on the first line of 96(98) (BL99)v, probably because he had not kept his text within few enough lines in the preceding pages, so may have been looking for text to drop. The missing text makes a good candidate for exclusion: it contradicts itself, claiming a land “full of good things” before introducing two-headed snakes, which are certainly not ‘good’. The illustrators of both Old English versions regarded the snakes as the most significant part of the *Hallescentia* section, selecting them alone for images. Knock suggests that this may have led to the exclusion. She proposes that Nowell or its exemplar was originally copied from a bilingual copy similar in plan to Tiberius, which usually has Latin text, followed by Old English, and then an illustration. A scribe with little or no Latin, or just trying to save time, could work backwards from illustrations to find the Old English text, rather than reading all of the text in each section. In Tiberius, *Hallescentia* is in a

10 Kiernan, *‘Beowulf’ Manuscript*, at e.g. p. 143; Fulk, *‘Beowulf’ Manuscript*, p. xi.

11 Knock proves that the exemplar or an antecedent was quite badly damaged in at least one place, *Synoptic Edition*, pp. 106–110.

different section from the snakes, but is unillustrated. That is, the manuscript presents, in sequence, *Hallescentia* (Latin text); *Hallescentia* (Old English text); snakes (Latin text); snakes (Old English text); illustration showing the snakes. If Scribe A were the first to produce a monolingual Old English text, the exclusion is indeed an instance of clumsiness, but hardly of lack of interest. It is more likely, according to Knock, that the Nowell Codex was copied from an exemplar where the detail had already been excluded, in which case we cannot hold Scribe A responsible for the divergence of his text from that of Tiberius.<sup>12</sup> It is perhaps also worth observing that a feature of the Nowell Codex is its exclusive use of the vernacular, which is unusual given the texts selected for inclusion. It is plausible that it may have been produced for or by individuals who had very limited Latin; this instance of text being mistakenly excluded as a result of a failure to follow the Latin part of an exemplar fits in such an environment – though no firm connections can be made.

The black colour of the *Hostes* is another detail that Scribe A may have seen as irrelevant. The creature is shown on the same page, and, based on its exclusion from continental versions, the mention of the colour may be a detail put into words as a result of the insular illustrations, rather than the other way around.<sup>13</sup> So it is likely that the comment was not in the exemplar and, even if it was, it is entirely reasonable for the scribe to have excluded it.

The third omission is the only one Rypins inserted into his transcription, because without it the section does not make sense. The men who wield the power are illustrated; presumably as part of their *gededefelice* (“honourable”) nature, they are shown, seated and talking, in eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon dress. But without a textual presence, *cýnedome* and *anpalde* stand without a subject to deploy them. Like the *Hostes* image, that the illustration shows something the text omits makes it probable that the image was at least inspired by an exemplar which had access to the full account. It seems that Scribe A was running out of room here and had to make a decision about what to exclude before he reached the image space. The alternatives, of writing into the image space or of continuing the section underneath it, were by this stage unattractive, possibly because he had previously conflicted with Draughtsman A over similar instances. That is, under pressure, the scribe made a poor decision to exclude the phrase. It is worth noting that there is a point between *hýhst* and *to cýnedome*. Points are not particularly unusual in *Wonders*.<sup>14</sup> Nor is

12 Knock, in McGurk *et al.*, *Illustrated Miscellany*, p. 94; *Synoptic Edition*, pp. 104–105.

13 Knock, ‘Analysis of a Translator’, p. 122.

14 Excluding those to either side of numbers, I count 70 (including this one), with a slight trend of higher frequency towards the start of the text.

it abnormal to have a point followed by a regularly proportioned letter; indeed, a point is followed by a lower-case round *s* in the previous manuscript line. However, this first point is paralleled in Tiberius where the second is not. And, as discussed below, Scribe A does sometimes use points at moments – such as this one – where text is missing. Following Knock, it seems likely that the exemplar was damaged or incomplete. It is, then, entirely feasible that the exemplar was missing the requisite phrase. This leaves us with a scribe who noted a textual issue but did nothing about it. This is not particularly careless, but does look lazy given the proposal made in Chapter 3 that the draughtsmen had more than one exemplar of *Wonders* to work from. Of course, if the additional exemplar was in Latin, it is possible that Scribe A could not read it: one deficient vernacular text could result in this loss.

Scribe B behaves in the same way on 160 (BL163)r.17, noting an omission in Scribe A's work on *Beowulf* without inserting a new word, though he almost certainly had only one (defective) exemplar to consult. So to find Scribe A unfaithful to the text through sloppiness or inattention here would be to overstate the case. Fidelity to exemplars seems to be being exhibited by both scribes, neither of whom seems to have felt authorised to insert the words needed, even where they are fairly obvious from the context. Scribe A does not always mark sites of obvious omission. Knock notes nine single word or short phrase omissions, which she broadly attributes to a defective exemplar. Only three of these are pointed.<sup>15</sup> Unpointed instances include nouns, noun phrases, and verbs which are essential to the sense of what is written. Based on their frequency and placement within sections, Knock suggests that they may have been intended for rubrication in the exemplar copy, but stood incomplete. Again, excluding these words when they were probably not in his exemplar does not make Scribe A exactly inattentive; indeed, that he marks some of these sites (if that is what he is doing) arguably shows attention to detail. But he does not mark all of them, and makes no effort to solve the gaps even though more than one exemplar for the text was probably present in his scriptorium. At best, Scribe A seems to have lacked initiative, particularly when compared with Draughtsman A's capacity to fill awkward spaces.

There are fewer significant textual difficulties in *St Christopher* and *Alexander*, but this is not to suggest that they are free of challenges. A significant

15 *Synoptic Edition*, p. 105. Of Knock's list of omissions, Scribe A points spaces for *lange* §8 on 97(99) (BL100)v.1; *hi beoð speartes hipes* §13 on 99(95) (BL102)r.9; *tpýlice* §17 on 100(96) (BL103)r.3. Not pointed are: *fet* §9 on 97(99) (BL100)v.7; *stopum* §10 98(100) (BL101)v.1; *on brixonte* §14 on 99(95) (BL102)r.13; *men akende* §15 on 99(95) (BL102)v.1; *dracan* §16 on 99(95) (BL102)v.11; *is* §28 on 103 (BL106)r.4 (*fet* and *on brixonte* should both occur at the end / start of manuscript lines).

instance is on what is now the first page of *St Christopher*. As part of the saint's tortures, Dagnus

hýne het spingan mid  
isernum gyrðum ⁊ he het set tan on his heafðe  
þrý peras. Þa cempaþ þa...

*commanded that he should be beaten with iron rods, and commanded that three men be set on his head. The soldiers then...*

Careful solutions have been proposed to this absurd scene. The Latin text in the *Acta Sanctorum* reads:

Et iratus rex iussit ligari manus et pedes ejus, et cædi ad virgas ferreas: & mitti in caput ejus cassidem igneam. Tunc dixerunt tres ex consulibus...

*And the angry king commanded that his hands and feet should be bound, and he should be struck with iron rods, then that a fiery helmet be set on his head. Then it was said by the three advisers...*<sup>16</sup>

McGowan suggests that the fiery helmet has been accidentally omitted and that a subsequent attempt to make sense of the passage resulted in a point being placed between *þrý peras* and *þa cempaþ*, making the latter phrase a nominative plural rather than an accusative singular. Replacing the point with *of* would bring the text into line with the *Acta Sanctorum*, and then the only error would be the omission of the *cassidem igneam*.<sup>17</sup> There are two stages here: first, the omission of the translation; second, the attempt to resolve the resultant mess by moving *þrý peras* into the subsequent gap and inserting a point. A final stage is missing, of finally sorting out the text by insertion, or of comparing the text with an alternative source and working out how it should read.

It is worth noting that there has also been an erasure between *þrý* and *peras*, probably of *h* or *hi*. This, along with the point, indicates that the scribe has looked again at this passage and tried to make it work. He may have made the second sentence read “hi þa cempaþ þa...” (“they [i.e. the three soldiers] to / of the champion”). That the scribe tried (and failed) to make it work is significant. First, it makes it likely that Scribe A was not the one to omit the missing

<sup>16</sup> Taken from Rypins' transcription in *Prose Texts*, p. 108; translation is mine.

<sup>17</sup> Joseph McGowan, ‘Notes on the Old English version of the *Vita Sancti Christophori*’, *Neophilologus* 75 (1991), 451–455, at p. 452.



phrase, but had a faulty exemplar which he was trying (and failing) to make more sensible. Second, it implies that he did not have another version of the Christopher legend to use to sort out this problem, or, conceivably, that he had one in Latin which he could not use. Along with the instances from *Wonders*, it seems likely that Scribe A used points to indicate sites of textual difficulty and that he lacked the initiative or skill to resolve them. Given that Saint Christopher was fairly widely known in the period, mostly in Latin versions, and that the scriptorium probably had more than one exemplar for *Wonders*, the likelihood that Scribe A could not read Latin increases.

This defence of Scribe A's work is not intended to suggest that he made no mistakes. The prose pieces in the Nowell Codex have their fair share of the errors and difficulties common to all scribal activity, and these are also seen in abundance in *Beowulf*. But, against a number of previous readings, these prose texts do not seem especially poorly copied. Certainly when placed next to the text of the poem, which itself has a large number of problems, they look simply like a fairly regular scribal effort – at points struggling and at points unthinking.<sup>18</sup>

### Corrections

Because they show conscious activity much more clearly, corrections are generally clearer evidence of behaviour or approach than errors or inconsistencies, and there are many in all of the texts that merit consideration.<sup>19</sup> As part of his argument that they were a separate, less regarded, project, Kiernan has argued strongly that, in comparison with *Beowulf*, the prose texts were barely proof-read and corrected.<sup>20</sup> However, they do contain many corrections of different types. Probably the clearest evidence that Scribe A paid serious attention to the prose texts comes at a micro-level, with amendments to individual letter-forms. This is the same type of correction that Kiernan identifies in Scribe A's portion of *Beowulf*, arguing it shows “commendable care for even rather fine details” and which, by implication, he does not see the scribe making in

18 Normal scribal errors are usefully characterised by Derek Pearsall as “scribal chatter or ‘static’”, ‘The Auchinleck Manuscript Forty Years On’, *The Auchinleck Manuscript: New Perspectives*, ed. Susanna Fein (York, 2016), 11–25, p. 22.

19 See also Thomson, ‘Scribes, Sources, and Readers’, p. 66.

20 Most recently, in a preface to the revised edition, he says that “[n]either scribe proofread the prose codex.” *‘Beowulf’ Manuscript*, p. xxiv. See also pp. 9 & 194. Kiernan no longer sees the prose texts as a separate codex, pers. corr. 22/1/14.

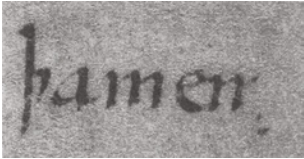


FIGURE 30  
'pa men' on 97(99) (BL100)v.18.  
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TABLE 4      *Frequency of types of correction in Scribe A's texts.*

Texts		<i>St Christopher</i>	<i>Wonders</i>	<i>Alexander</i>	<i>Beowulf</i>	<i>Beowulf</i> (inc. S.B changes)
Number of sides		9	17	50	87	87
Total	count	8	7	47	96	112
corrections	av. per side	0.89	0.41	0.92	1.1	1.29
Erasures /	count	4	2	36	23	33
deletions	av. per side	0.44	0.12	0.72	0.26	0.38
Insertions	count	2	3	5	30	42
	av. per side	0.22	0.18	0.1	0.33	0.48
Emendations /	count	2	1	4	15	22
overwriting	av. per side	0.22	0.06	0.08	0.17	0.25
Erased and	count	0	1	2	5	15
rewritten	av. per side	–	0.06	0.04	0.06	0.17
Two corrections	count	0	0	3	4	2
in one site	av. per side	–	–	0.06	0.05	0.02

the prose texts.<sup>21</sup> In fairness to Kiernan, many of these corrections have not seen by other readers of the prose texts including Stanley Rypins and Phillip Pulsiano; they may have been made more visible by the *Digitised Manuscripts* images. And it is certain that there are many more such corrections that I have not identified. There are also a number of instances where the scribe may be making a correction, such as at 97(99) (BL100)v.18, shown in Figure 30, where *n* at the end of “pa men” may originally have been written *m* with most of the second arch erased, or where he may have started to write the second arch and then broken off. Such uncertain instances are not included in my counts. Nor do I include in my counts the use of periods to mark omission, as speculated above, as I cannot be certain that this is corrective activity.

21 *‘Beowulf’ Manuscript*, p. 197, with discussion pp. 196–198 and several examples n. 27 p. 197.

I count 112 corrections of different types in Scribe A's portion of *Beowulf*, including a possible fifteen made by Scribe B as we shall see in Chapter 5.<sup>22</sup> One type of correction, which also occurs in the prose texts, but which is generally more frequent in *Beowulf*, is the emendation of individual letters or letter groups. However, the most common type of correction Scribe A uses in *Beowulf* is superscript insertion: this category makes up 30 of the 96 corrections I see him making in the text. The relative frequency of types of correction in Scribe A's texts is shown in Table 4. Kiernan argues that corrections are more frequent in *Beowulf* than in the prose texts, seeing about 180 "intelligent" corrections in the poem.<sup>23</sup> By my counts this is still the case, but the difference is nowhere near as stark as he suggested, as clarified by discussing frequency rather than occurrence.<sup>24</sup> While they lend support to the idea that *Beowulf* was regarded as a more challenging text to copy than the prose pieces, the numbers do not bear out a conclusion that Scribe A paid substantially less attention to producing accurate copies of the shorter texts than he did to the poem.

In fact, the rate of corrections Scribe A himself made in each text is about the same – close to one per side – apart from in *Wonders*, with about one correction every three sides. This makes the catalogue text remarkable, not the poem. However, *Wonders* is a very short text in terms of sides, and even more so of text. It occupies 17 sides, but given that so much space is taken up with images and frames, it has fewer than 6 sides of writing.<sup>25</sup> That makes it shorter (in textual terms) than the fragment of *St Christopher* that remains and means that it, too, has about one correction per 'full side' of writing. Scribe A's

- 
- 22 A full list of the corrections I have identified is provided in Appendix 3. There are probably many other corrections: every time I return to the manuscript, I find some I had not previously identified and during my physical examination I was able to discount eight and add one; in a partial list, Kiernan notes fourteen in the poem that I had not identified independently and four more that, without uv light, I have not been able to see, '*Beowulf*' *Manuscript*, n. 27 p. 197. Orchard gives a list of corrections to *Beowulf* as an Appendix to 'Reading *Beowulf*'. I am grateful to Profs. Kiernan and Orchard for discussing this with me.
- 23 At e.g. '*Beowulf*' *Manuscript*, p. 193. Cf. 'Eleventh-Century Origin', p. 12. Kiernan's numbers refer to the text as a whole, without distinguishing between the scribes; he does not have a comprehensive list of corrections he has identified. I am grateful to Prof. Kiernan for discussing these issues with me. Cf. Fulk *et al.*, *Klaeber's 'Beowulf'*, n. 6 p. xxxii.
- 24 As shown in Table 11, I see 181 corrections in *Beowulf*: 112 in Scribe A's stint (including 16 by Scribe B and / or others) and 69 in Scribe B's.
- 25 Rachel Burns' calculation, proposed in her paper 'A Metrical Rationale for the Manuscript Layout of Old English Verse', delivered in §66 of the International Medieval Congress at Kalamazoo, 14/5/15; confirmed in pers. corr. 15/7/15.

vigilance is, therefore, most remarkable for its consistency in terms of the attention he pays and the mistakes he identifies himself as making. What these numbers show, then, is actually quite limited: all of the texts he worked on received roughly the same degree of corrective interest. That so much is left uncorrected, that the type of corrections made does not seem to be particularly consistent, and that required text is not supplied even if sites of omission are marked, collectively imply that Scribe A was aware of the need to show an interest in correcting his text but was perhaps not particularly engaged with the rigours required to perfect it. The micro-corrections and the attendant difficulty in identifying all of Scribe A's corrective activity are more convincing than the statistics as indicative of scribal attention, which may, therefore, have been more focused on the appearance than the reality of having produced good quality copies.

Further, while Kiernan is right in showing that the scribes deserve more respect than they have often been given for their work on *Beowulf*, it is impossible to maintain that they have produced a perfect copy. Scribe A misses out line 403b at 139 (BL141)r.2, and most of 1803a at 169 (BL172)v, with no evident attempt at correction or feasible note of omission in these places. There is an unerased dittograph of *hilde*, with the word repeated at the end of 148 (BL151)r and at the start of the verso.<sup>26</sup> Proper names are regularly confused in the manuscript.<sup>27</sup> On 135 (BL137)v.11, Scribe A corrects *ecþeop* to *ecgþeop*, but does not do so on 150 (BL153)v.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, on 143 (BL145)v, *n* is missing from *Grendel*.<sup>29</sup> There can be little doubt that the scribes were not unintelligent, and not uninterested, but to argue that *Beowulf* was special to them, and produced, proof-read, and cared for to a greater degree than their other texts is taking the argument too far the other way. The number of micro-corrections in *Beowulf* is impressive, and indicative of scribal care, but a large number of obvious errors remain. A number of micro-corrections also take place in the prose texts, with a number of obvious errors still remaining. That suggests that we simply have a scribe working on a project considered important enough for him to need to

26 Kiernan does not transcribe this into his text, and works a little hard to argue that the dittograph may have been "noted[...]yet harmlessly left as a catchword. An erasure at the end or the beginning of the folio might well have been more unsightly than the error itself[...]even if *hilde* was overlooked by both scribes, the change of page helps excuse the oversight." *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, p. 217.

27 Neidorf, 'Scribal Errors of Proper Names'. As noted in Chapter 1, this is not as unusual in Old English texts as Neidorf's argument implies.

28 Neidorf notes the first of these in 'Scribal Errors of Proper Names', p. 269.

29 Kiernan prints this as it appears in the manuscript, *Electronic 'Beowulf'*. Neidorf notes it as one of his "minor errors", 'Scribal Errors of Proper Names', 269.

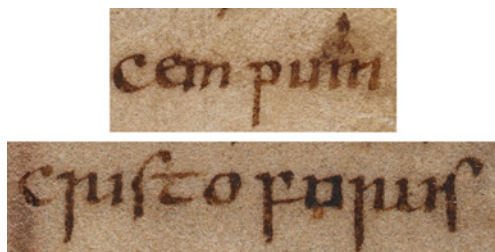


FIGURE 31 'Micro-corrections' in *St Christopher*: cempum on 94(92) (BL97)r.8 and cristoforus on 95(97) (BL98)r.3

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show that he had worked to make corrections, with roughly equal status given to each text.

Four examples of such 'micro-correction' will suffice here. First, at 94(92) (BL97)r.8, the first part of Figure 31, an ascender has been partly erased, leaving *cempum* as a clear reading, accepted without comment by Rypins and Pulsiano in their editions of *St Christopher*. In the same text, at 95(97) (BL98)r.3, the second part of Figure 31, the scribe wrote *cristofurus*, and then added a bar to convert the first *u* to *o*. Judging by the variant ink tone, it is possible that the whole letter was re-inked, and that the correction was made later than the original writing. In *Wonders*, on 102 (BL105)v.11, the first part of Figure 32, an originally written *tagl* has been converted to *tægl* after the initial text was written.<sup>30</sup> Finally, in the same text at 105 (BL108)v.3, the second part of Figure 32, a mistakenly crossed *p* has had the offending cross bar scratched off. In the magnified image, the change is clear; again, neither Rypins nor Orchard note the erasure, probably because it has been so neatly and skilfully performed.<sup>31</sup> The regularity of this level of micro-correction demonstrates that Scribe A was alert to errors and actively seeking to correct them. A similar correction in *Alexander*, on 110(118) (BL121)v.14, where a cross-piece is scraped away to convert *þ* to *p*, was made in error; it should have been done on line 11 where the text still reads *þurh þa lond*. This suggests that at least some of these micro-correcting erasures were made at a proof-reading stage.

Single letter insertions are also fairly frequent. Scribe A has, for instance, added superscript *ū* on 153 (BL156)v.7, *a* on 101 (BL104)r, and *o* at 117(109)

30 This bears comparison with *sæde* corrected to *sægde* on 130 (BL133)v.19, which Kiernan notes as an example of a correction made "purely for the sake of orthographic conservatism." *Beowulf* Manuscript, p. 196.

31 Kiernan notes a similar instance of *ð* corrected to *d* in *Beowulf* at 172 (BL175)v.3, in *Beowulf* Manuscript, n. 27 p. 197.

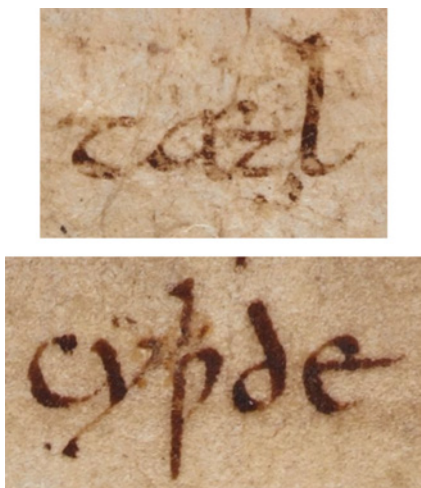


FIGURE 32

'Micro-corrections' in *Wonders*: tægl on 102 (BL105)v.11 and an erased cross-piece on 105 (BL108)v.3.

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(BL112)r.13, where it is squeezed in above the extended final stroke of preceding *r*.<sup>32</sup> It is Scribe A's usual practice to extend his final letter strokes when he had reached the margin, most evident in *e*. Here, he has completed the word with a flourish, and then realised that an *o* had to be added, placing it over the top stroke of the *r* so that it can be read as part of the same word.

On a larger scale, there are many instances where one or two letters have been erased. In *Alexander*, a remarkable thirteen of these, 36% of the total number of erasures in the text, are single-letter erasures at the end of what is now *me*. Where the erased letter can be identified, it is always *c*: it is likely that the erased letter was always *c*, and that we are seeing an effort to standardise the text's orthography towards the tenth-century West-Saxon spellings seen in *Judith* and *St Christopher*, perhaps moving away from an Anglian exemplar containing *Beowulf* and *Alexander*.<sup>33</sup> Seventeen instances of *mec* and four of *usic* remain uncorrected. There are no indications of this corrective

32 Similar instances occur elsewhere, such as at 119(111) (BL114)r.20 with superscript *pe* and 108(116) (BL119)r.9 with superscript *r*.

33 On dialects and orthography here and below, I follow Alistair Campbell, *Old English Grammar* (Oxford, 1959), esp. §4–11; see also Kenneth Sisam, 'Dialect Origins of the Earlier Old English Verse', in Sisam, ed., *Studies* (1953), pp. 119–139; Fulk et al., *Klaeber's 'Beowulf'*, pp. cliv–clxii; Thomas E. Toon, 'Old English Dialects', *The Cambridge History of the English Language. Volume 1: The Beginnings to 1066*, ed. Richard M. Hogg (Cambridge, 1992), 409–451. For caution in assuming such clear movements from one dialect to another, and a more complex example of orthographic changes in Oxford, CCC MS 279B, see Rowley, 'Historia Ecclesiastica', pp. 159–162.

energy in *Beowulf*, where there are still sixteen and four instances respectively, with Scribe B using archaic forms slightly more often than his colleague, which is particularly noticeable given that A writes the majority of *Beowulf*.<sup>34</sup> This, taken with the dominance of *-eo-* spellings in Scribe A's work on the poem against B's more frequent use of *-io-*, makes it probable that at some stage Scribe A felt the need to modernise orthography, but that he did not do so when copying *Alexander* – only at some point after he had completed it.<sup>35</sup>

On the other hand, given the high incidence of intertextual variation within each scribe's texts, it seems likely that they were both, to at least some degree, seeking to preserve exemplar forms, either as a result of their training or as part of a special effort for this project. This may be a reason for the abortive attempt to remove *mec* forms from *Alexander*: an attempt to correct during proof-reading was dropped when the corrector, probably Scribe A (though perhaps Scribe B or someone else), realised that the exemplar used the form and the variance with the preceding texts was – in terms of this copying project – correct. In keeping with this picture, most of the erasures occur over a few pages: 70% of them across two double pages, from 116(108) (BL111)v to 118(110) (BL113)r. Elsewhere, the inconsistency of corrective direction reinforces this impression of the scribe seeking to work towards different orthographic preferences in each text. Scribe A produces *æ* by correction seven times. Where in *Wonders* *e* is added to the *a* in *tægl*, in both longer texts it is initially written as *e* with the *a* shape subsequently added, at 119(111) (BL114)r.20, 142 (BL144) r.7, 164 (BL167)v.9, and (less certainly) 135 (BL137)r.10. On 120(112) (BL115)r.2, in *Alexander*, *g* has been erased from *sægdon* to leave *sædon*. In *Beowulf*, at 130 (BL133)v.19, *g* has been inserted into *sæde* to make *sægde*.<sup>36</sup> Kiernan uses this to propose a later corrector who made such changes to the prose texts “purely for the sake of orthographic conservatism”, which in turn supports his argument for scribal lack of interest in the prose texts, because all changes can be attributed to this unknown later third hand.<sup>37</sup> However, it seems more probable that Scribe A made both changes, each time working towards what his exemplar showed. Interestingly, Scribe A leaves *g* out of words in *Beowulf* relatively frequently, often correcting by insertion and sometimes – as *ecþeop* on

34 Scribe A writes *mec* eight times and *usic* once; Scribe B also writes *mec* eight times, but *usic* thrice. Scribe B also uses *ussum* and *usses* once each.

35 As Sisam observes, *-io-* is “relatively frequent” in *Alexander*: there can be little doubt that Scribe A was broadly faithful to this aspect of his exemplar when copying this text, no matter what he went on to do in *Beowulf*, ‘Compilation’, pp. 92–93.

36 Kiernan, ‘*Beowulf*’ *Manuscript*, p. 144.

37 Kiernan, ‘*Beowulf*’ *Manuscript*, p. 196.

135 (BL137)r.17 – not. Probably his instinct was to have *c* alone, but the exemplar preserved the earlier orthography.

Other relatively frequent corrections to his work are insertion of an omitted *-h-* (e.g. 167 (BL170)v.10: *onferpe* → *onferhpe*, corrected by Scribe B); conversion from a single vowel to a diphthong (e.g. 164 (BL167)r.8: *togenes* → *togeanes*); and deletion of an erroneously geminate terminal consonant (e.g. *sceall* → *sceal*). The first two of these may, perhaps, point in the same direction of the scribe writing late forms and correcting to an exemplar's earlier orthography. But the examples are far too infrequent, and orthographic evidence too limited, to make any such suggestion with certainty. It is likely that, in general, Scribe A actively sought to preserve exemplar orthography, even where this varied from other texts he was copying. As noted in Chapter 1, that his orthography differs so obviously from Scribe B's in *Beowulf* must show him being less faithful to the exemplar in that text at least with regard to the archaic spelling of the hero's name, and probably more broadly in that text in terms of replacement of *-io-* with *-eo-*. The point remains that where we can see Scribe A taking action and making definite choices about orthography, he seems to work to different standards in each text (and, indeed, to change the standard he works towards within *Alexander*). But he often falls away from those standards.

Kiernan regards the erasures in *Alexander* as the work of a later standard-enforcing editor.<sup>38</sup> This does not seem necessary to me. It is not clear why such an individual would have chosen to work on this text and not *Beowulf*, why he would have missed so many instances of the errors he was reading the text to expurgate, and why he showed no interest in correcting (for instance) Anglian *in* for standard West Saxon *on*, which occurs 75 times in *Alexander*, or the frequent use of medial *-io-* in that text. Further, it is not clear to me what distinguishes these single-letter corrections from those in *Beowulf* which Kiernan uses to show how conscientious and skilful Scribe B was. While there is insufficient evidence to dismiss Kiernan's theoretical standardiser, it seems clear that there is little evidence for his existence, and no good reason to assume that Scribe A was not responsible given both that his hand (or an able imitator of it) was clearly involved in other corrections, and that in *Beowulf* Scribe A is less inclined to use archaic spellings. The difference between the scribes' approaches to orthography is also more readily explained if A is the corrector here.

38 He does, though, note of corrections to *Beowulf* that "[i]t is quite safe to assume that the one or other of the scribes, who undoubtedly made the written corrections, made the erasures too." *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, p. 216. He proposes the "medieval spelling reformer" at p. 144.



Having worked on *Alexander*, often reproducing exemplar forms, it seems as though he then changed his mind and began, in *Beowulf*, to update. It makes complete sense, in such a context, that he would go back and start to remove the forms that he felt he had copied erroneously in *Alexander*. That he stopped correcting them, and that Scribe B regularly uses older forms, implies that some oversight was applied and an active decision made to retain what the exemplar showed.<sup>39</sup> If this – highly speculative – narrative were to hold, it is important to note that no-one felt it important enough to replace the erased letters, or to adjust the forms used by Scribe A in his work. Similarly, it is worth noting that while Scribe B certainly felt that *Biowulf* was the correct spelling for the poem's hero, he did not feel so strongly about it that he corrected any of Scribe A's uses of *Beowulf*.

The orthographic evidence for the origin of the texts has been worked over in detail, mostly with an eye to tracking *Beowulf*'s point of origin.<sup>40</sup> For now, the points made in Chapters 1 and 2 are worth briefly reasserting. Both partial texts – *Judith* and *St Christopher* – share a complete absence of medial *-io-*, indicating a later date of production than the other pieces, and a common exemplar. *Alexander* and *Beowulf* share a number of older orthographic features. In addition to the presence of *-io-* and the use of *mec* and *usic*, *Alexander* consistently and *Beowulf* intermittently use the preterite form *cpom(on)* for the verb *cuman*, whereas *St Christopher* and *Judith* use only the later form *com(on)*. Also of interest is that, in *St Christopher*, Scribe A consistently uses the form *cýningc* for nominative singular 'king', whereas in *Alexander* he varies between *kýning* and *cýning*, and in *Beowulf* tends to use *cýning* with occasional initial *k-*. To the extent to which its short text can be assessed by these orthographic tests, *Wonders* shares some features with both pairs. Lacking accusative pronouns, or past tense uses of *cuman*, the only basis of comparison is two uses of medial *-io-* which make it less prone to the form than *Beowulf* and *Alexander*, but not fully purged as *Judith* and *St Christopher* are. This fits in with the general picture I propose of three exemplars, with *Wonders* brought in to mediate between collections of recent and more archaic texts.

39 Contrast the 'Corrector' to *Christ and Satan* in Junius 11, who seems to have worked consistently if not entirely successfully towards "normalization into late West Saxon", Charles R. Sleeth, *Studies in 'Christ and Satan'*, McMaster Old English Studies and Texts 3 (London, 1982), p. 34, with discussion pp. 34–46.

40 The fullest discussion remains Sisam's in 'Beowulf Manuscript', p. 64 and 'Compilation', pp. 68–69, 73, 83 & 88–95; see also overviews in Orchard, *Companion*, pp. 23–28; Fulk et al., *Klaeber's Beowulf*, pp. clvii–clviii; Rypins, *Prose Texts*, pp. xxxviii–xxix; F. Klaeber, ed., *Beowulf* and *The Fight at Finnsburg* (London, 1950, 3rd edition), §24, n. 7 p. vii.

That both scribes are able to copy in different orthographic patterns, varying by text, indicates that both felt some sense of responsibility for replicating their exemplar texts and that both had some capacity to do so. However, as noted in Chapter 1, throughout *Beowulf* archaic spellings are used much more frequently and consistently by Scribe B, and Scribe A's approach to orthography when working on *Alexander* and *Beowulf* seems confused. He was clearly capable of replicating different orthographic patterns, and doing so with some consistency. However, we can be almost certain that the exemplar *Beowulf* had far more *-io-* forms than he produces, including the name of the hero; the scribe is, in turn, so certain that *-eo-* forms should be used that he mistakes *Beow* for *Beowulf*. This may indicate his knowledge of the name spelt this way in another text; it certainly indicates that when he started copying the poem he was not applying the same principle of replication as he did when copying *St Christopher* and *Alexander*. Perhaps he simply found the oldest text much harder, but the abortive attempt to modernise pronouns in *Alexander* makes it perhaps a shade more likely that the idea of modernising exemplar forms was introduced, applied, and then rejected in the process of the making of the codex. That the policy changed between the copying of *Alexander* and of *Beowulf* shows that the decision was not to do with the exemplar that contained them; there is no support here for the theory of an ancient, difficult to read, exemplar of *Beowulf*. And none of this confusion needs to have involved anyone else: Scribe A often gives indications of a lack of certainty and of inconsistent behaviour, and he may just have behaved somewhat impulsively. As has been said often above, this is a speculative scenario built on fragmentary evidence of behaviour, but it fits the facts as we have them.

In all four of Scribe A's texts, there are words and phrases repeated which indicate carelessness in both copying and proof-reading. In *Alexander* at 107(115) (BL118)r.14–17, for example, the text's repetition of “*7 ic*” has resulted in the whole phrase “*7 ic swiðe pundrade þa gesælignesse þære eorðan*” being written twice, an error not identified in proof-reading.<sup>41</sup> And erasure of basic dittographic error can be seen in *St Christopher* at 91(93) (BL94)v.7, where *liges* has been erased because it was rewritten at the start of line 8. A similar error may have taken place in *Alexander* at 109(117) (BL120)r.17, where an erasure of approximately 5 letters follows *7*; it is likely that this was an accidental repetition of “*7 minne*” at the end of the previous line. These minor dittographies stand against Boyle's suggestion that the scribes were transcribing (or attempting to transcribe) line by line from their exemplars. As well as making a mess of

41 This error is noted by Kiernan as evidence of lack of proof-reading, *‘Beowulf’ Manuscript* p. 145.

his neat calculations by adding several lines that he does not account for, they do not collectively give a picture of a scribe who is finding his place by looking for the correct exemplar line to transcribe. Rather, we see here a scribe who is looking for words and phrases which he recognises. This is especially true in a case like that of *liges*: how could a scribe copying an exemplar line by line get confused about whether a word starts or ends a line?<sup>42</sup>

It is also true to say that dittographic error is more frequent in the prose texts than in *Beowulf*, a fact which becomes more significant given that the poem is so much longer than any of the prose pieces. But this cannot truly be said to indicate scribal inattention. Dittography is a frequent scribal error in all manuscripts and we have no evidence that it resulted from an unusual lack of engagement with the texts worked on. Equally, there is little other evidence of sloppy work on the prose texts. *St Christopher* is a religious text and includes a prayer for those who copy it: given the general attitude of the period towards scribing as devotional activity it seems more likely that a scribe would copy it with close attention.<sup>43</sup> Dittographic error in the prose texts may simply be more frequent because they are more repetitive than poetry, and because the language and its patterns are less significant to the meaning of the text. As we will see, it is possible that the scribe was engaged to some degree with the metrical requirements of *Beowulf* and was thereby paying closer attention to its language in the copying process.

It is not always possible to explain major erasures, but they are certainly not always the result of dittography. For instance, that at 91(93) (BL94)v.19–20 in *St Christopher* has been photographed under UV light. The results do not show what was originally written, but the combination of letters does not match any nearby sequence.<sup>44</sup> Whatever has been removed, such alterations are more likely to have been made in a proof-reading process than when copying. The difficult fiery helmet sequence looks like a later emendation: what is left behind makes little sense and both insertion and erasure seem to be separate uncertain attempts to make sense of a corrupt text. The emendation of individual letters, however, required attention to the exemplar and a concern with

42 A comparable error takes place in *Beowulf*, with *hilde* repeated at the end of 148 (BL151) r and at the start of the verso; on a larger scale, Scribe B copied the last two lines of 179 (BL182)r at the start of the verso before erasing them.

43 See also Thomson, "Whistle While You Work", pp. 101–102.

44 McGowan notes: "Parts of letters discernible under UV; clearer are two words beginning with *þ*, one in each line", 'Readings from the *Beowulf* Manuscript', p. 27. There is a similarly lengthy erasure in *Alexander* at 116(118) (BL111)v.1–2, but I can find no reason for this and it has not, to my knowledge, been photographed under UV light.

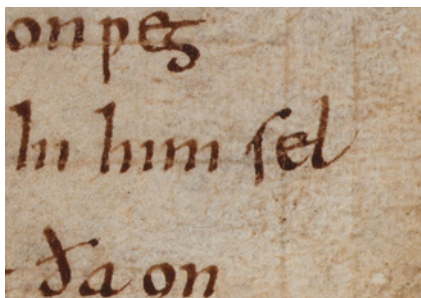


FIGURE 33

*Possibly added sel on 115(107) (BL110)v.15.*

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its forms. If this had taken place in a proof-reading stage, we could expect near-absolute consistency, but this is not the case. The removal of *mec* and *usic* forms is probably an example of a correction not performed while closely following the exemplar. Proof-reading seems to have been a read through, with narrative inconsistencies and some orthographic peculiarities catching the scribe's eye, and others evading attention. Many corrections of individual letters, however, must have been in response to the exemplar and are in the hand of Scribe A. They are, therefore, likely to have been made during the copying process.

On some occasions, words certainly written by Scribe A appear to be in a different shade of ink or are misaligned with those around them. These may be either proof-reading insertions or natural inconsistencies during the writing process. One example is at 115(107) (BL110)v.15, Figure 33, where *sel* is written at the end of a line, crossing the margin and at a slight angle to the surrounding text. The ink is darker than that in "hi him". Another is at 118(110) (BL113)r.20, where *afyllon* is written almost entirely in the right hand margin. The corner of the page is heavily rubbed, and it is not possible to see clearly what has happened here. I have not included either of these in my correction counts, as I am far from certain that the oddities of appearance are due to corrective activity rather than damage or clumsiness in the original act of writing. Nor have I included the additional, twenty-first, line of text on 114(122) (BL125)v, in *Alexander*. The curious facts here are that the line was ruled for, not simply squeezed in, and that the ruling is perfectly clear on the recto but has not been used there. Kiernan argues that this is corrective activity, and is evidence for a lack of textual engagement: the additional ruling was made after at least 114(122) (BL125)v and the following page (115(107) (BL110)r) had been written, at which point the scribe realised that he had left out a line of text, went back and added it. Another interpretation is possible.

In the context of 114(122) (BL125)v, it is more likely that this was not a retrospective correction at all. Throughout the page, Scribe A exhibits the kind of compression shown by Scribe B on the final pages of *Beowulf*, with far more

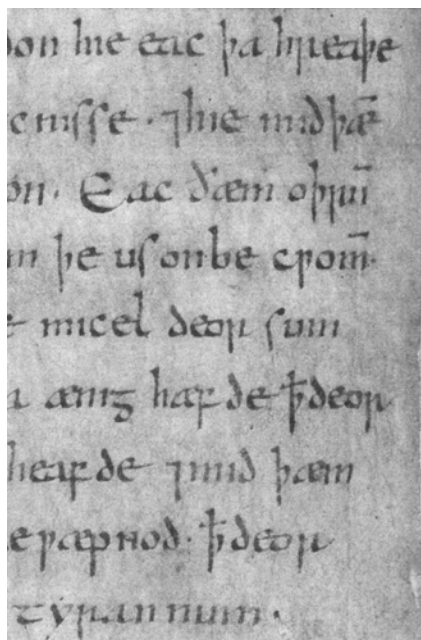


FIGURE 34  
Varying abbreviation at n4(122) (BL125)v.9–17.  
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abbreviation than is usual and several instances of unusual compression of words and letters. As shown in Figure 34, this reaches a kind of crisis in the middle of the page, around lines 10–14. The first three of these end with abbreviations unusual for Scribe A: *þæ* for *þæm*; *oþrū* for *oþrum*; *becpōm* for *becpomm*. Line 14 squeezes *þ deor* into a space which would normally only be used for *þ*. However, the nightmare seems to have suddenly resolved itself: by line 16 the same last two words are given much more space, and line 17 spaces out *dentes tyrannum* extravagantly and leaves plenty of room at the end of the line. It is possible that Scribe A, reaching the final side of this gathering, suddenly recognised just how much text he needed to fit in. It is impossible to know how this was determined; perhaps it was matched to the length of exemplar gatherings. As he wrote, he became increasingly concerned about how to fit his text into this one side. However, half-way through, he realised or was told that he could more simply add a ruled line at the foot of the page if necessary, and this is what he did. It is worth noting (as noted in Chapter 2 for all gatherings) that the end of the gathering does not reach any kind of sectional break or even the end of a sentence in the text. The scribe's sense of what needed to be copied in a particular stint or group of pages seems likely to have been determined by the physical quantity of text, not its structure or meaning, a point important in discussion of the handover between the scribes which thereby looks less

unusual than when viewed in isolation. It is also worth noting that there is no evidence to suggest that the scribe was aware of a problem and starting to work out how to handle it until he had nearly finished the gathering.<sup>45</sup> This suggests, against Boyle's proposition of careful calculations in advance, that the quantity of text was measured in gatherings or possibly sides – certainly not in lines – and there is no evidence that it was worked out more than a side or so ahead at any one time.

Scribe A's attempts to correct the texts and make them work in the space available are not evidence of inattention, but his frequent difficulties with layout do suggest a degree of inexperience. This is most clear in *Wonders*, where he repeatedly struggles with realignment of text around images: as argued in Chapter 3, this seems to be a demanding adaptation into a new format from one or more exemplars. Similar indications of his inexperience or uncertainty can be seen where his words approach margins. It is, of course, inevitable that text sometimes crosses the right margin: it does so in most manuscripts at some point and is not generally marked by any scribal concern.<sup>46</sup> Scribe A, however, seems to worry about crossing the margin. Frequently, when he does so, his letters become more compressed. On 104 (BL107)v, for instance, as shown in Figure 35, lines 9 and 12 cross the margin, each time by only a letter or two.

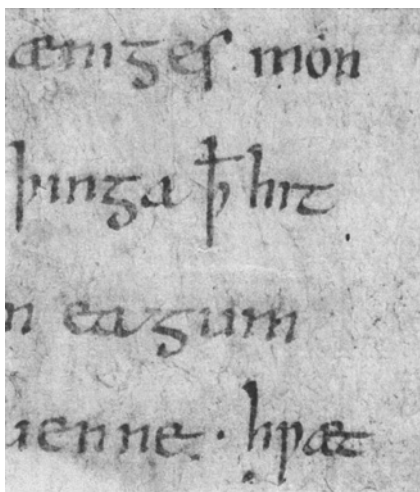


FIGURE 35  
Changing compression on 104 (BL107)v.9–12.  
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45 Compare Scribe B's approach at the end of *Beowulf*, discussed in Chapter 5.

46 Malone, strangely, says that "there is no[...]boundary for the text in the right-hand margin." *Nowell Codex*, p. 16. It is the case that right margins are sometimes invisible, and often hard to see, but it is hard to understand how Malone can have missed them when so many are now clear in his facsimile, let alone the physical book.

The *n* at the end of line 9 is clearly compressed: lower than the other letters in the same word, and tighter than surrounding *n*'s. Similarly, *hwæt* at the end of line 12 has a low, small *t*, significantly smaller than that at the end of *hit* on line 10, which has an extended toe to ensure it touches the margin. Comparable instances recur throughout the prose texts. At 109 (117) (BL120)v.9–13, Figure 36, Scribe A's sensitivity to the right margin can be clearly seen. When *e*'s end lines, they frequently have a flourished tongue, as for instance on line 13 here, where he has plenty of space to fill before the margin. On the previous line, *e* crosses the margin and has a tongue, but it is more restricted. Three lines above, *e* is entirely written after the margin and it is very narrow with no real tongue at all.

At times, this general concern becomes an uneasy inconsistency of policy. Throughout 122(114) (BL117)v.8–14, Figure 37, the scribe seems to change his mind about what degree of violation of the right hand margin is acceptable. On line 8, *-es* crossing the margin is compressed, in the same way as the examples above. On line 9, *-an* crosses the margin in the same way, but with no apparent attempt at reducing its size. On the next line, the scribe does not try to squeeze in any of the letters of *frined* despite the relatively large space that

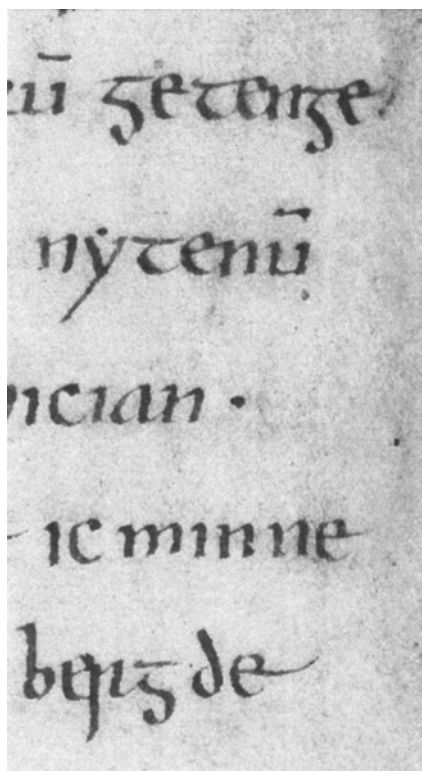


FIGURE 36

*Changing tongues of e* on 109 (117) (BL120)  
v.9–13.

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is left as a result: *fri* at least would comfortably fit. Line 11 works conventionally, with *u* of *becuman* fitting onto the margin and the word split between two lines. But then from lines 12–14 the pattern repeats: the letters *-en* that violate the margin are compressed; *-on* is written across the margin with no concerns apparent; then a gap is left. It seems to be the case that Scribe A was neither confident enough to leave spaces consistently, nor experienced enough to assess regularly and accurately how many letters would fit onto a line, nor urgently attempting to fit as much as he possibly could onto each page. This attempt

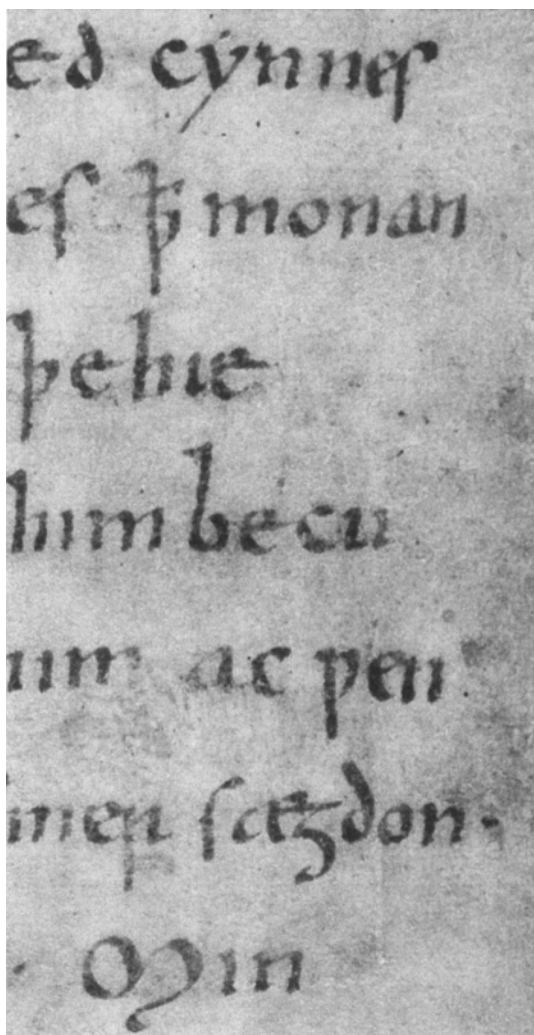


FIGURE 37 *Uneasy violation of the right hand margin on 122(114) (BL117)v.8–14.*  
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to engage with the scribe's thinking and approach by considering the changes he makes and areas where he seems unsure is necessarily subjective, seeking as it does to make suggestions about his approach and attitude based on sets of data and some specific case studies. The picture that emerges is, however, broadly consistent, suggesting a copyist dealing with variant exemplars, working to a fairly specific brief about what to retain and what to change, and struggling a little to keep up with those demands. His struggles may have come to a head when working on *Beowulf*.

### Scribe A's Density of Copying in *Beowulf*

There came a point in copying *Beowulf* when Scribe A realised that he was falling behind what was expected of him. The tenth gathering, with folios 163 (BL166)–170 (BL173), has 22 lines of text rather than 20 throughout. The additional line rulings are clearly visible on 163 (BL166)v, and text is evenly spaced from here until 166 (BL169): there was evidently a degree of forward planning and a definite decision to increase the amount of text per side. However, there is a shift half-way through the gathering, at 167 (BL170)r. The first five lines are spaced as if working towards just 20 lines on the side, but lines 6–22 are squeezed together. This is a pattern that repeats with slight variations for recto and verso on the remaining pages of the gathering. The rulings are not clearly visible on any of these pages, but it is possible that the rulings were not for 22 lines, and the scribe had to work to include the appropriate number of lines per page, with somewhat less skill than Scribe B shows when fitting 21 lines into the usual text frame later in *Beowulf*.<sup>47</sup> Possibly the line rulings were hardly more visible to him than they are now, and he simply pressed on with writing as he normally would, before realising that he was supposed to be doing something different. This creates a fairly bizarre picture. To follow old line rulings on one side accidentally, realise the error after five lines, and then squeeze lines together for the rest of that side, makes some kind of sense. However, to do the same on the verso, and then again and again on six more sides is absurd.

Scribes did not always rigidly follow line-rulings; some scribes, indeed, show a “somewhat cavalier” approach to them.<sup>48</sup> And sometimes scribes struggle to

47 Discussed further in Chapter 5.

48 Gameson, ‘Book Production at Worcester’, p. 200, referring to Sistan, the tenth-century Worcester scribe who copied London, BL, Royal MS 8. B. ix and Worcester, Cathedral Library MS F. 91, with Sistan and his manuscripts discussed pp. 198–200 including a plate of Worcester F. 91, fol. 214r, p. 199. Bishop also attributes London, BL, Royal MS 13. A. xv to

follow rulings for localised reasons. On Nero A. i fol. 90r, for instance, the first scribe left a wider gap between lines 3 and 4 to make space for an enlarged but embedded initial capital *D*. This seems to have resulted in him leaving a similar space on every side until he resolved it on fol. 94r, returning to normal rulings. This small set of sides is not likely to have been separately ruled, so the scribe seems to have followed where he saw he had written on previous sides: copying fol. 90v, he could see through the parchment; copying fol. 91r, he could see across the open book. Or pages could simply be misruled: in Trinity R.5.22 (717), fols. 135–147 in Scribe 4's stint are irregularly spaced with lines 21–24 far too close together and wider gaps between lines 9–10, 11–12, and 25–26. This must be a result of ruling these six sheets together, doing so rather poorly, and following the rulings nonetheless.

So, misaligned text is not particularly unusual in the period, and nor is it necessarily an indication of low grade work.<sup>49</sup> In Nowell, this is not a discrete group of sheets by any gathering system, so they could only have been badly ruled together if Scribe A made a gathering then ruled half of it at a time, which is possible but does not seem likely based on the present visibility of line rulings. Given how localised is his difficulty with the ruled lines, it is also unlikely that he shared Sistan's 'cavalier' approach. He is, I think, most likely to be working like the Nero scribe. It is just about conceivable that Scribe A found it easier to follow the lines of text he had written on the recto of 167 (BL170), hence reproducing the irregular spacing, and then deliberately produced the same pattern on 168 (BL171)r because it would look rather odd (as 166 (BL169) v and 167 (BL170)r do) to have differently spaced patterns on facing sides. But then the scribe starts to look like a man in a panic, because he repeats the pattern until the end of the gathering, resulting in another strange-looking double page at 170 (BL173)v and 171 (BL174)r. There is probably another explanation, but there can be no doubt that the variation and its unnecessary perpetuation suggests an inexperienced scribe aware of some general principles but unsure how to extricate himself from a difficulty once he had entered into it.

In a similar vein, it is worth noting that, when working on *Beowulf*, Scribe A ranges significantly in the quantity of text he writes on a side. I count poetic text by half-lines. This is hardly precise, but comes closer to an objective

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Sistan, *English Caroline Minuscule*, §18, but Gameson dismisses this, 'Book Production at Worcester', n. 15 p. 198. I have not seen these manuscripts.

49 Cf. Kwakkel, 'Classics on Scraps', who connects misalignment with line rulings – and indeed malformed letters as discussed in the previous section – with a lack of scribal care and perhaps high-speed work, pp. 112–113.

judgement of quantity than counting words or lines.<sup>50</sup> A side with anything between 41 and 48 full half-lines is nothing out of the ordinary for Scribe A and can be attributed to the length of poetic lines or inevitable adjustments in the size of letters, rather than something more unusual.<sup>51</sup> This process can be pursued to see the distribution of denser and less dense sides, and shows what we would expect: there are lots of sides close to the mean, several that are within or on the edges of this normal range, and not many at all to the extremes on either side. Those extremes thereby become worthy of closer examination as examples of Scribe A doing something unusual, though they can of course sometimes be attributed to obvious mechanical details: more half-lines due to the additional lines ruled in gathering 10; or fewer due to a hypermetric stretch.

Given the variations between each gathering, it is more useful still to follow the same process for each of them.<sup>52</sup> Gatherings 5 and 11 contain very few sides of the text of *Beowulf* fully written by Scribe A (4 and 3 respectively). The smaller sample size makes the results for those gatherings less significant; I have not considered them in the discussion below. Once the results for gatherings 5 and 11 have been discounted, the ranges shown in two gatherings immediately stand out, as shown in Table 5. Where gathering 9 has an unusually wide range with its sides varying by seven half-lines, gathering 8 is very regular, with sides only varying by four full half-lines. Gathering 8 contains 147 (BL150)

50 All counts here only include half-lines that entirely fit on a side, to avoid the messy subjectivity of deciding whether a copied proportion of a half-line counts as '0.5', or '0.25', and so on. That is, any half-lines split across sides are not counted and therefore the total number of half-lines in my count is not the same as the total number of half-lines copied by Scribe A. Where a manuscript line has been used to record the fitt number, it has been counted as two half-lines, which is slightly below the usual amount of text that Scribe A fits onto a line. It will be clear from this explanation that, scientific as such figures may superficially appear, they are a representative guide to scribal practice rather than a forensic definition of it.

51 This range has been calculated as within one standard deviation above or below Scribe A's mean number of half-lines per side. His mean is 44.55. His variance, or how many half-lines he produces above or below that mean throughout his work, is 11.42. More usefully, his standard deviation is 3.38; subtracting and adding that to the mean gives us how many half-lines more or fewer Scribe A fits onto a side without any exceptional circumstances. So anything between 41.17 and 47.93 half-lines is within the range of Scribe A's standard deviation, which I have rounded up and down for ease of use. A standard deviation is calculated by subtracting the mean from each individual figure (i.e. the number of half-lines I count on each side) and squaring each result, calculating the mean of all of those squared results, and then working out the square root of that mean.

52 Here and in subsequent discussion, for clarity of discussion I use Malone's 'traditional' gathering numbers, not those proposed in Table 2.

TABLE 5 *Range of numbers of full half-lines per side in each gathering of Scribe A's Beowulf.*

Gathering	Normal range of number of full half-lines on a side	Treated as	Size of normal range
<i>All</i>	41.17–47.93	41–48	7
5	42.63–48.37	43–48	5
6	40.93–46.95	41–47	6
7	39.33–45.04	39–45	6
8	42.83–46.67	43–47	4
9	40.67–48.08	41–48	7
10	45.44–50.29	45–50	5
11	39.61–43.72	40–44	4

r–154 (BL157)v. The first six of these all contain either 45 or 46 full half-lines, four of them exactly. This consistent sequence is disrupted by 150 (BL153)r, which contains just 43. It is interesting that the verso contains 49 half-lines, bringing the average for the folio back to 46. Both recto and folio of 154 also contain 46 full half-lines; 152 (BL155)r has 45 and the remaining folios in the gathering vary more widely with the final verso (154 (BL157)v) having only 41. So folios 147 (BL150)–151 (BL154) have eight consecutive sides demonstrating a remarkable degree of consistency in the amount of text (measured in number of half-lines) that Scribe A has written on them. That consistency, including the balancing act performed between the recto and verso of folio 150 (BL153), makes it possible that Scribe A may have actively sought to record 46 half-lines on each side, or 92 per folio.

Gathering 9 contains 155 (BL158)r–162 (BL165)v. Its comparatively wide range commences with three very light sides containing 39, 38, and 40 half-lines respectively. That the mean number of half-lines per side in this gathering remains very close to the overall mean is the result of ‘extra’ half-lines being squeezed in to 157 (BL160)r, 159 (BL162)v, 160 (BL163)r, and 161 (BL164)r, with 48 half-lines each, and 161 (BL164)v, with 51.<sup>53</sup> This seems to suggest a sustained effort to increase the amount of text per side, and perhaps the realisation that not enough ground was being made up, hence the remarkably high number

53 Compare Scribe B's panicked effort at the end of *Beowulf*, cramming in 57, 59, and 65 half-lines into the final three sides respectively; discussed further in Chapter 5.

of half-lines on 161 (BL164)v. The succeeding two sides, recto and verso of 162 (BL165), both contain hypermetric lines and hence only manage 45 and 42 half-lines respectively: it may be the case that the 51 half-lines on 161 (BL164)v were in anticipation of this difficulty. The mean number of full half-lines on these three sides is exactly 46, the same number Scribe A worked so hard to maintain for much of gathering 8. So the wide range in the number of half-lines per folio in gathering 9 is attributable, not to lazy or inconsistent penmanship, but a rebalancing: more text being included on some sides to make up for less on others. This does not, of course, explain why there is so little text on the earlier sides, a question to which I return below. But it does show us variant behaviour in two different gatherings both of which seem ultimately focused on the same end. It is, then, just possible that Scribe A had been given a target of 46 half-lines (or perhaps 23 lines) per side; we may be seeing the results of the process used to calculate the folios needed when poetic texts were copied in the eleventh century, and some degree of managerial oversight of the scribing process. This is, of course, highly speculative: pure coincidence of numbers remains a possibility. The general trend, as shown in Table 6, is still worth looking at; whether or not Scribe A and his overseer counted text in numbers of half-lines, they were concerned about the quantity of text copied on each side.

Overall, once the first and last gatherings are excluded, and in keeping with Orchard's broad findings about the density of copying throughout the poem, earlier sides are short of half-lines and later sides more full, tending towards being crammed. The fullest side in Scribe A's work, 163 (BL166)v, is a prime example. It comes at the start of the tenth gathering, part of a sequence of folios all of which exceed the average: its recto has 50 full half-lines; it has 52; 164 (BL167)r has 48; 164 (BL167)v has 51; 165 (BL168)r has 49. This is, of course, largely due to the two additional lines of text on all folios of the tenth gathering. Based on an approximate average of two poetic lines on each manuscript line, it is reasonable to expect that an average of 44 half-lines per side would increase to 48 with two additional lines ruled. The scribe exceeds this anticipated increase at the start of the gathering. His effort drops away, though: the next six sides vary between 46 and 48 half-lines, before 168 (BL171)r falls

TABLE 6     *Mean numbers of full half-lines per side across each gathering of Scribe A's Beowulf.*

Gathering	Total	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Mean no. of full half-lines per side	44.55	45.50	43.94	42.19	44.75	44.38	47.81	41.67

to 42 – remarkably few given the additional manuscript rulings. Two intense sides (with 49 and 51 half-lines respectively) follow this aberration, but clearly the required amount of text exceeded his capacity by this stage. It is possible to read the half-line omitted on 169 (BL172)v (poetic line 1803a) in this context of a panicked rush to enter all of his allocated text into the space available.

Possibly, Scribe A was expected to complete his portion of *Beowulf* in gathering 10: as soon as he starts work on the eleventh gathering, he no longer writes 22 lines and returns to his normal 20. He copies just 39, 42, and 44 full half-lines respectively on his final three sides. Perhaps, in doing so, he was relaxing: he had failed to squeeze everything in as required and the lack of dense copying and the lack of additional lines on his final few sides shows that this seems, on the whole, not to have mattered too much to him, Scribe B, or any overseer.

If this narrative is accepted, what remains unexplained is why it was so difficult for him to meet his target, and why he was allowed to perform so poorly for such a sustained period. From the first eight sides of gathering 8, it is clear that he was capable of making considerable efforts over short sequences to ensure, quite precisely, that the correct amount of text was included. From the last three side of gathering 9, and the 22 lines used throughout gathering 10, it is clear that he was capable of anticipating the challenge of hypermetric lines and recalculating accordingly.<sup>54</sup> Scribe A is not incompetent but does, again, appear to be relatively inexperienced: he knows the principle but finds it hard to apply across more, perhaps, than a single day's stint which may have been roughly equivalent to half of one of his normal gatherings.<sup>55</sup> The sequence of shorter folios across the end of gathering 8 and the start of gathering 9 is worth considering here. From 152 (BL155)v to 156 (BL159)v the range is 39–44 half-lines per side, well below the usual range for Scribe A's performance as a whole, and dramatically inconsistent with the first two thirds of gathering 8 and last two thirds of gathering 9. This may have been the key factor behind the

54 Groups of hypermetric lines are generally agreed to be at poetic lines 1163–8 (on 155 (BL158)v), 1705–7 (on 167 (BL170)r), and 2995–6 (on 194 (BL198)v). Individual hypermetric lines are at 2173, 2297 and perhaps 2367. See Fulk *et al.*, *Klaeber's 'Beowulf'* pp. clx–clxi and n. 4 p. clxi. None of these are accepted by Kiernan, *Electronic 'Beowulf'*.

55 Based on the very approximate calculations in Gullick, 'How Fast Did Scribes Write?': "the rate of 200 lines per day is a good working figure", p. 238. Scribe A's normal gatherings have 16 sides of 20 lines each, making 320 lines. Based on his apparent inexperience and uncertainty, it seems reasonable to expect Scribe A to have completed about 160 lines per day, though Gullick has examples of scribes who wrote less, pp. 234–235. This means Scribe A's extant work on the codex of about 3,260 manuscript lines would have taken him about 20 days; if *Christopher* were complete and written by him, there would have been more like 3,900 lines giving him 26 days' work.

decision to rule 22 lines on each folio of the tenth gathering, perhaps at the instigation of Scribe B or another overseer. In her study of Durham A.IV.19, Karen Jolly finds that Scribe C makes a concerted effort to shape his *a* as he appears to have been shown by Aldred's carefully drawn example on fol. 61r at line 14, until he gets to lines 20 and 22 when he reverts to his preferred square form. Her speculative but absolutely reasonable hypothesis is that Aldred focused the scribe on his *a*'s, but then "walked away or ceased to focus on that particular issue", at which point Scribe C stopped trying so hard.<sup>56</sup> A similar hypothesis of Scribe A working under supervision which became more or less intense at different points (though in a more sustained form than that Jolly suggests for the Chester-le-Street scriptorium) makes good sense of his inconsistent behaviour, with apparent intermittent efforts to work towards a set standard. The following section turns from these uncertain signs of a lack of control in *Beowulf* towards considering indications of Scribe A's engagement with his texts.

### Usage of Capitals

Capitalisation is both a structural and a stylistic technique in medieval manuscripts.<sup>57</sup> In codices of Old English poetry, where texts are untitled, a line of capitalised letters can indicate a significant break within a single text or the start of a new piece.<sup>58</sup> More usually, sections within texts are indicated by the use of a capital letter up to three or four times the size of regular letters, with these enlarged shapes usually placed in the margin and sometimes decorated. The decoration means that they often give scribes an opportunity to demonstrate their own sense of style; in higher status manuscripts an additional artist-scribe could be brought in to complete the capitals. This seems, for instance, to have been the case in Junius 11 where spaces were left by the scribe for both images and capitals. The decoration of capitals may also have had meanings that supported interpretation of text, or that engaged with the contexts in which texts were read.<sup>59</sup>

56 Jolly, *Community of St Cuthbert*, pp. 156–158, quotation from p. 158.

57 My discussion here broadly follows that given in 'Capital Indications'.

58 Although many readers are far from convinced by some boundaries asserted in this way, or find places where they should be applied but are not. Bernard Muir discusses this difficulty in relation to all of the Old English poetic codices, *Exeter Anthology*, pp. 17–19, and with particular reference to the texts of the Exeter Book, pp. 19–25.

59 See for instance Winfried Rudolf's argument about the import of the capitalised letters in 'Riddling and Reading'; and cf. the scraping and redecoration of the initial capitals in London, BL, Additional MS 40618, an eighth-century Irish pocket gospel book, discussed

These major, marginal capitals are usually self-evident. Often less obvious within texts are other larger than normal letters, usually following simple points. Krapp and Dobbie, in the *Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*, call these 'small capitals'; they could with equal precision have called them 'enlarged letters', because there is little distinction other than size between the letter-forms deployed for these 'capitals' and regular text.<sup>60</sup> Some minor capitals, indeed, are barely larger than the letters around them, while – on occasions – a large minor capital can be the same size as a relatively unimpressive marginal capital used on the same page, as in for instance *C* in comparison with the marginal *P*, *H*, and crossed *P* on 93(91) (BL96)r. The sole difference is, then, that the 'minor' capital is embedded into the text, and the 'major' one starts a new line. On occasions, there are minor capitals which seem coincidentally to start a new line. One example is the *S* on 94(92) (BL97)r.18, where the previous line of text comes to the right hand margin and a minor capital is required but, because it happens to start a new line, it is placed in the margin rather than within the line. By comparison with the large *O* four lines above, *S* was not intended to be major.

In analysing these different forms, I have again taken a rather crude statistical approach. This reduces each capital appearance to 'major' or 'minor', notes its placement, and the overall frequency of use. I should note that the 'major' counts do not include the fully capitalised first lines of *Alexander* and *Beowulf* as these would distort the overall averages too much for what is already a readily understood phenomenon. It is also important to bear in mind that the identification of a 'minor' capital is not always certain: frequently, the decision about whether to 'count' a letter as minor or regular is subjective.<sup>61</sup> The distinction in Scribe A's texts is most evident in *St Christopher*, where there is a clear difference between major and minor capitals. *S* and *O* particularly – but also to some extent *P* – can be written as lower case (*s*, *o*, *p*), as a small capital (*s*, *O*, *P*), or as a large capital (*S*, *O*, *P*). Distinguishing between the first and last of these categories is straightforward; the second is more ambiguous and is primarily distinguished by size. For letters such as *eth* (*ð* lower case; *Ð* upper case) which have a different capitalised form the difficulty is not removed: is

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by Carol Farr, 'Style in Late Anglo-Saxon England: Questions of Learning and Intention', *Anglo-Saxon Styles*, eds. Karkov and Brown (2003), 115–130, at p. 120.

60 Dobbie's discussion of 'small capitals' in the poems of the Nowell Codex is in '*Beowulf* and *Judith*', pp. xxvi–xxvii; his list is Table iii on p. lxxi. Cf. George Krapp's discussion of small capitals in *The Junius Manuscript*, ASPR I (New York, 1931), p. xx.

61 O'Brien O'Keeffe warns particularly of the danger of confusing an elongated *i* with a small capital, *Visible Song*, n. 5 pp. 156–157. Dobbie comments on the difficulty of being certain of scribal intention in all places, '*Beowulf* and *Judith*', p. lxxi; cf. Doane, *Genesis A*, p. 13.



an enlarged  $\delta$  intended to be more significant than one of more usual dimensions, or merely a moment of scribal excess?<sup>62</sup> What is the reader expected to infer when an  $\delta$  is smaller than is usual?<sup>63</sup> To a large degree, this difficulty points to the strength of handwritten above mechanised textual production: the former is capable of much finer distinctions.<sup>64</sup> It also serves as a reminder that the reading experience is a complex one, with meanings often encoded in culturally specific ways.<sup>65</sup> It is possible (though unlikely) that no-one other than Scribe A was ever capable of decoding the variation in letter size which is reduced here to two categories. In most cases, my counts of minor capitals agree with Rypins' transcription of the prose texts, and with Dobbie's count of occurrences.<sup>66</sup> As in considerations of the density of copying, the numbers thus produced rarely tell us anything in themselves about scribal practice, but they do narrow the field of search, enabling focus to be brought on areas that seem to be unusual.

Kiernan suggests that the treatment of marginal capitals tells us something about how Scribe A regarded his texts. His argument is that those in *Beowulf* are distinct from those in the prose texts, and that they are therefore different projects.<sup>67</sup> However, the differences between treatment of capitals in the individual prose texts are at least as significant as those between the treatment in any one of those texts and *Beowulf*. As is clear even from the very basic breakdown in Table 7, it is simply wrong to read 'the prose texts' as a homogeneous

62 E.g. at 105 (BL108)v.9 and 126 (BL129)r.9.

63 E.g. at 98(100) (BL101)v.3.

64 Compare Frederick M. Biggs' argument that capital size is controlled to distinguish between sectional breaks and new texts, thereby allowing the Invention and Exaltation of the Cross to be presented as linked but distinct in Paris lat. 5574, 'Comments on the Codicology of Two Paris Manuscripts (BN lat. 13408 and 5574)', *Via Crucis: Essays on Early Medieval Sources and Ideas in Memory of J.E. Cross*, eds. Thomas N. Hall, with Thomas D. Hill and Charles D. Wright, *Medieval European Studies* 1 (Morgantown, WV, 2002), 326–330, at p. 330. Cf. Rudolf, 'Riddling and Reading', p. 523. On the sophistications of scribal presentation see most recently Hamburger, *Script as Image*, e.g. pp. 1–2 & 11.

65 Cf. Damian Fleming's discussion of Scribe A's use of the *ethel* rune (𐌺) in three places: on 141 (BL143)v.18, 149 (BL152)v.16, and 167 (BL170)r.15, poetic lines 520, 913, and 1702 respectively. He finds, persuasively, that the rune is deployed at "exotic (in a Germanic sense)" moments, when the past is being talked about or obscure tribes mentioned, 'Ethel-weard', p. 183; cf. John D. Niles, 'The Trick of the Runes in *The Husband's Message*', *ASE* 32 (2003), 189–223, p. 196; Symons, 'Wreopenhilt ond wrymfah'. See also Thomson, 'Manuscript Stability', pp. 68–71.

66 I see the same minor capitals as Dobbie in *Beowulf* and *Judith*, with two additions to the latter text: *s* on 200 (BL203)v.18 and *L* on 206 (BL209)r.6.

67 *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, p. 141.

TABLE 7 *Numbers of capitals in Scribe A's texts.*

Text	Folios	Total capitals	Av capitals per page	Major Capitals (mC)	Av mC per page	Minor Capitals (MiC)	Av MiC per page
<i>St Christopher</i>	9	28	3.11	9	1.00	19	2.11
<i>Wonders</i>	17	33	1.94	31	1.82	2	0.12
<i>Alexander</i>	50	102	2.04	1	0.02	102	2.04
<i>Beowulf</i>	87	81	0.93	28	0.32	54	0.62
Totals / averages	163	244	1.50	69	0.42	177	1.09

group with regard to their scribal presentation. *Beowulf* has the fewest capitals per side of any of the texts, and fewer major capitals per side than any text other than *Alexander*, which uses none after its very first letter. To some extent, of course, the major capitals in *Beowulf* – like those in *Wonders* – are constrained by the number of sectional divisions, as these are the only places they are used. Only in *St Christopher* does Scribe A use major capitals more freely. Generally, there seems to be more flexibility in the use of minor capitals, and *Beowulf* uses fewer of those per page than any text other than *Wonders*. Purely on the basis of frequency of occurrence, *Beowulf* does not look like the most important text in the Nowell Codex. Further, purely on the basis of these numbers, *Beowulf* could be argued to have at least as much in common with each of the prose texts as they have with one another. The sheer level of inconsistency between the scribal features of the texts makes it look as though they do not come from a common source, or at least that they have been treated differently by the scribe.

It is clear that Scribe A's policy on what requires capitalisation of any kind, and what degree of capitalisation is appropriate at different points, varies between the texts. As far as I can tell, however, major capitalisation is consistent within each text.<sup>68</sup> In both *Beowulf* and *Wonders*, they indicate sectional divisions. In the prose text, these are uncontentious: they occur at transitions from one geographical location to another. There is no editorial dispute about where a section begins and ends, even though this results in some very short, and one

68 An exception is the capitalisation of both letters in *ON* at 109(117) (BL120)r.20. *On* appears 6 times with a capitalised *O* in *Wonders*, but this is the only occasion on which the *n* is also capitalised.

or two rather longer, sections. More complex texts demand more careful interpretation of just what sectional divisions are showing us. In *Beowulf*, marginal capitals occur relatively regularly, preceded by a number. In most cases, these correspond with narrative breaks in the text, and are therefore widely accepted as providing divisions between fitts, although there is disagreement about who first decided where these divisions should fall, what their function is, and how well they were chosen.<sup>69</sup> There is a very limited amount of *St Christopher* from which to draw a judgement, but changes of subject or movement of time usually warrant capitals. Consequently, *Se*, *Þæt*, *Pysses*, and *Opre* are the most characteristically capitalised words. *St Christopher's* capitals, especially major ones, also tend to cluster around moments of tension or drama. There is, however, no regularity in the use of marginal capitals: they cannot be predicted from this trend. They are certainly not used sparingly or to indicate sectional divisions, as several can occur during a single scene of action. On 93(91) (BL96)r, three marginal capitals occur within eight manuscript lines, which would produce a section of four lines of text, another of three, and a third which completes the folio and ends on 94(92) (BL97)r after forty-four manuscript lines.

As shown in Table 7, in *St Christopher* there is on average one major capital per page, though others, originally in the part of the text we still have, may have been lost to fire in 1731. 93(91) (BL96)r, has three. Such deviation from the norm demands investigation. Short and irregular passages cannot be different copying stints, and are unlikely to be related to portions for reading at different times. These breaks have no relation to narrative shifts in space or time. The sequence, however, relates the most dramatic moment in the text as we now have it: the saint, bound, is shot with arrows. The arrows stop in mid-air and hang there. The first very short section has the persecutor, Dagnus, coming out to mock his victim: “hpær ys þin god” (“where is your God?”); the second has the arrows turning and blinding the king. Perhaps, then, major capitals are here working to render a passage more significant, highlighting a sequence of particular interest and one to be declaimed with a stronger sense of drama or read with greater attention. It is not possible to know whether the capitals were in the exemplar or first used by Scribe A; there is a case to connect the placement of marginal capitals with the exemplars rather than the scribes, but also a case to connect interpretative capitals with scribal choice.

69 The most recent discussion is that in Fulk, ‘Numbered Sections’, where he goes against earlier readings to find that while some sections may be ‘authorial’, some at least are scribal, pointing especially to fitts XXXI, XXXII, XXXIII, XXXIV, and XLII, all copied by Scribe B, as ineffectively chosen. See his references, n. 14 p. 95, for earlier studies and Fulk *et al.*, *Klaeber's 'Beowulf'*, pp. xxxiii–v for a summary of the marking and origin of the fitts.

In *Wonders*, major capitals are always firmly in the margin, and are used to open new 'sections' with movements to different creatures or areas. These vary in length: the shortest is 6 lines on 103 (BL106)r; the longest 18 lines on 99(95) (BL102)v and 100(96) (BL103)r. As with *St Christopher*, these clearly do not correspond to reading portions, as has been argued for the poetic fitt divisions of *Beowulf* and (with more certainty) the texts of Junius 11.<sup>70</sup> But they do give convenient markers of shifts in the text's interest. Modern editions, indeed, treat the capitals as sectional divisions and it is on the basis of the manuscript's capitalisation that I have, following Orchard, numbered each wonder as in Appendix 1. This is not quite the same as the shifts in *St Christopher*: the capitals do not engage with the text and its drama in the few sections that are long enough to become narrative, such as that of the ant-dogs and their gold. Some divisions which no longer make absolutely clear sense are retained, such as those between sections §28 and 29 on 103 (BL106)r; in other places, such as §6 on 96(98) (BL99)v, two different wonders are joined which – in this insular version of the text, missing some details of place and action extant in Continental analogues – no longer seem congruent. This gives the divisions a strong sense of being carried from the source, with little scribal choice about when and where to deploy them.

The third prose text exhibits yet another deployment of major capitals: they are never used in *Alexander* after the very first letter, an *H. Eth*, for instance, is always written as lower case *ð*, never *Ð*. After that first line, the only capital that could be considered major on any criteria is a *C*, the first capital after the opening line, on 104(BL107)r.8, which is in the margin and tinted with colour – but is also barely larger than the certainly minor capitals around it, such as *S* on the next line. The lack of structure this gives to the text is a challenge for editors, but it is also an interesting contrast with the sectioning approach taken in *St Christopher*, *Wonders*, and *Beowulf*. In terms of its use of major capitals, *Alexander* thus reads as more similar to one long (prose) fitt of *Beowulf* than the prose texts with which it is commonly grouped. This variance in function, especially when taken together with the evidence of form discussed further below, makes it likely that decisions about where to place major capitals were dictated by the exemplars rather than by the scribe.

### Minor Capitals

The purpose of minor capitals is less clear. Where they occur, they seem to begin sentences, and often to be connected with changes of scene or time.

70 Fulk, 'Numbered Sections', pp. 105–106, and refs.

But there are far more places where they are not used at the start of a sentence than those where they are: we are left with an overwhelming amount of negative evidence. Dobbie despaired of the situation in the poetic texts: "Because of the infrequency of the small capitals[...]it is impossible to trace any clear structural intention in their use."<sup>71</sup> This happens with other features of manuscript coding: Thomas Cable suggests that word spacing can often be purposefully explained but that sometimes "there is spacing where I cannot explain it, and in other places no spacing where I would expect it to occur."<sup>72</sup> It is probable that the use of graphical features such as spacing and capitalisation was emergent during this period:<sup>73</sup> scribes vary in the extent to which they deploy them, and of course it is likely that they would be used more freely when copying a text that a scribe felt able to interpret in this way.<sup>74</sup> Kiernan has argued that minor capitals can be used for emphasis. He takes the example of Scribe B writing *Biowulf*, poetic line 1999, at the foot of 173 (BL176)v. This is, he suggests, the scribe recognising that the name has been spelt alternately with an *e* and *i*, and using capitalisation to reassure us that the *i* spelling "is no mistake".<sup>75</sup> However, I know of no other instances of scribes encoding meaning in this way in this codex or elsewhere. Dobbie notes this capitalisation, but groups it with Scribe A's *Pealhðeo* at line 1215 (156 (BL159)v.18) and *Hroðgar* at line 1840 (170 (BL173)r.14), claiming – probably rightly – that in all three cases the initial capital is "undoubtedly because they begin new sentences rather than because they are proper names."<sup>76</sup> *Biowulf* and *Hroðgar* both also occur at the start of a new manuscript line, and this often seems to increase the likelihood of capitalising as a scribal reflex at points where it is appropriate in terms of both layout and syntax. The marginal minor capital *C* on the first page of *Alexander* can also be read in this context: when a minor capital is used, and

71 'Beowulf' and 'Judith', p. xxvii.

72 Thomas Cable, 'Review of Robert D. Stevick's *Beowulf: An Edition with Manuscript Spacing Notation and Graphotactic Analyses* (New York: Garland, 1975)', in *Computers and the Humanities* 11 (1977), 47–55, at p. 49ii. Cf. Daniel O'Donoghue's remark that manuscript punctuation is "not quite systematic, not quite random", 'A Point Well Taken: Manuscript Punctuation and Old English', *Inside Old English: Essays in Honour of Bruce Mitchell*, ed. John Walmsley (Oxford, 2006), 38–58, at p. 57.

73 Cf. O'Brien O'Keefe, *Visible Song*, e.g. p. 187.

74 Though contrast Doane, *Genesis A*, who sees them as most likely to be "irregular remnants of a much more systematic use of small capitals in an ancestor", p. 13. R.T. Farrell follows earlier editors in finding them used "with particular effectiveness in *Daniel*", 'Daniel' and 'Azarias' (London, 1974) p. 7, with discussion pp. 7–8.

75 'Beowulf' Manuscript, p. xxvii.

76 'Beowulf' and 'Judith', p. xxvii. Elliason and Clemoes, p. 22, note the same pattern in Royal 7 C. xii.

happens to coincide with the start of a new line, it is natural to incline towards placing it in the margin.<sup>77</sup>

Within the prose texts, there seems to be just one use made of minor capitals, functioning in effectively the same way as modern sentence markers when a change of focus occurs. They are rare in *Wonders*, but frequent in *St Christopher* and *Alexander*, with (on average) just over two on each page. This basic difference is probably related to the different text types: although it has some narrative episodes, *Wonders* is mostly a catalogue and principally divided by major capitals at sectional breaks; the other two are entirely narrative, and minor capitalisation helps to read them as such. In *St Christopher* they are more likely to be used at moments of narrative change and interest. I have not been able to distinguish between the 'major' and 'minor' shifts in this text, though as noted above the most dramatic scene is marked with major, rather than minor, capitals. The rare appearances of minor capitals in *Wonders* are at shifts of focus, such as going from describing the physical appearance of the Centaurs to explaining their behaviour on 100(96) (BL103)r.6. In *Alexander*, minor capitals do not seem to mark tension or drama. Instead, they are used (as on 105 (BL108)v, where six occur) to clarify the frequent shifts between Alexander's descriptions of his exploits and his addresses to his immediate audience. It is worth noting at this point that the text's traditional title as 'The Letter of Alexander the Great to Aristotle' is not a particularly accurate description of its interests.<sup>78</sup> While Aristotle is addressed at the opening, and occasionally in the rest of the text, Alexander mentions his mother Olimphias (L *Olimpias*), usually in conjunction with his sisters, more frequently than his teacher. The interest shown by capitalisation in this relationship could thus be taken to indicate an interest in a maternal relationship, or simply in relationships between home and abroad.

However, before taking a suggestion of interpretive interest too far, it is important to observe that, as shown in Figure 38, the most notable feature of the capitals in *Alexander* is that 37% of them occur in the first 20% of the text: that is, 38 of 102 minor capitals are in the first ten pages. There is also a sudden blooming of capitalisation on the penultimate page of the text:<sup>79</sup> it sees five capitals, well above the average of 2.04. This suggests an awareness of the shape of the text, and an interest in pointing its start and end, rather than any engagement with the narrative form – though these passages do also coincide

77 Cf. Wilcox on Cambridge, CCC MS 419, *ASSMF* 8, p. 3.

78 For discussion of *Alexander* and past editions, see Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, esp. p. 116, and notes.

79 The final page of *Alexander* has five lines of text, with the solitary word *finis* on line 6.

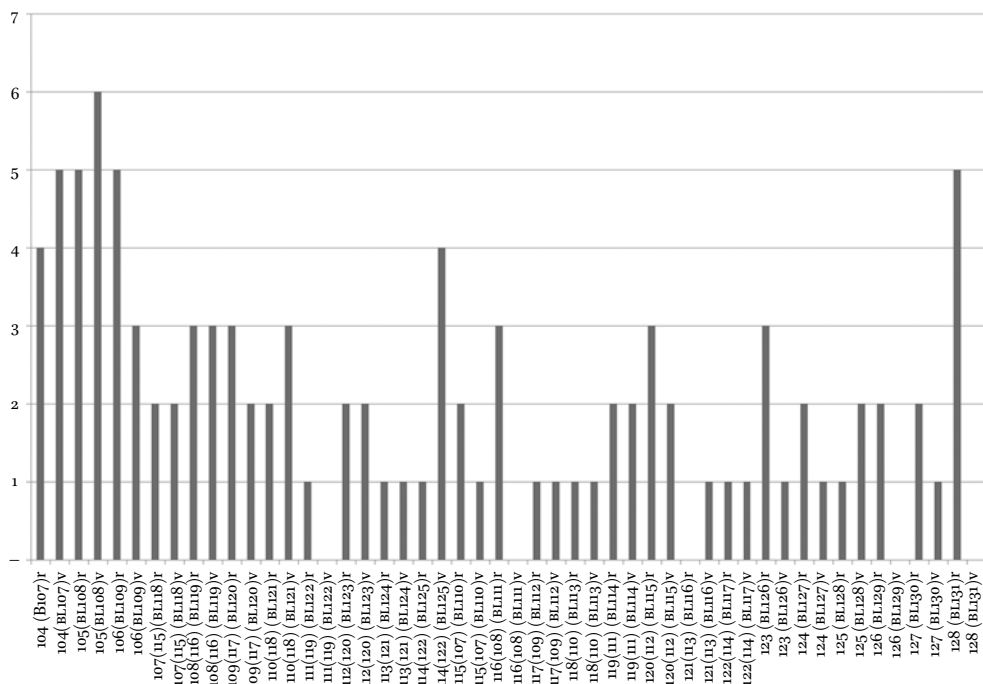


FIGURE 38 *Distribution of minor capitals in Alexander.*

with the most frequent addresses to those at home. It is again the case that minor capitals are not used with any consistency: some pages are studded with them; others have none at all. Minor capitals were, then, not used at regular intervals to mark a set quantity of text. Nor can anything be deduced from connections between the most intense sites of use: 105 (BL108)v has six in twenty lines; 128 (BL131)r has five. But they have nothing particular in common in narrative terms. If there is a pattern, the most visible one is simply more intense use at the start and end of the text: very plausibly, Scribe A is more inclined to use minor capitals when he has just begun a text or because it is coming to a conclusion. These may coincide with points in time when he became more aware of what he was doing, rather than mechanically copying what was in front of him; perhaps his mindset here could be connected with his apparent interest in showing that he had corrected the texts, as suggested above.<sup>80</sup> Occasional spikes within the text could perhaps indicate copying periods,

80 See my discussion of 'mechanical' and other copying processes in "Whistle While You Work".

or moments of supervision as suggested above in connection with Durham A.IV.19; there is little other evidence to support or refute either hypothesis.<sup>81</sup>

As noted in Chapter 3, that three of the first four capitals – all on the first page – are coloured suggests an opportunistic application of the ink used in *Wonders* rather than any particular policy. More surprising is the colour added to the capital *O* on 105 (BL108)v.2. To stain here, the colourist had passed over ten capitals, including two other *O*'s. That eventually selected for decoration is not particularly large or impressive: when written, it was not marked out as worthy of highlighting. It does, however, refer back to other letters: “On þæm ærrum gepritum þe ic þe sende...” (“In those earlier writings that I sent to you...”). Possibly this indicates a genuine interest on the part of the rubricator in Alexander’s correspondence and his process of remaining in contact with his family, or other putative Alexander texts, but the evidence is inconclusive. It may simply have been the case that the colourist turned several pages at once, or moved through swiftly in some other relatively thoughtless way, until he found a letter that, for whatever reason, caught his attention.<sup>82</sup>

Major capitals are used consistently throughout *Beowulf*. And, as might be anticipated from the pattern set by *Alexander*, minor capitals are used heavily at the start and relatively thinly thereafter: as shown in Table 8 the average use per side in the few sides used of gathering 5 is 1.25 minor capitals, and subsequent gatherings vary but are all below this; the distribution is also shown by side in Figure 39. As gathering 5 comes just after the scribe completed *Alexander*, it is feasible that he was bringing the same mentality to *Beowulf* with which he completed the prose piece. Unlike in *Alexander*, there is no spike at the end of his part of *Beowulf*: the last few sides Scribe A copied have no minor capitals at all. This is not exceptional: there are five other points during his work on *Beowulf* where no capitals are used for three or more sides.<sup>83</sup> However, that he does not use any at the end of his work seems odd and enhances the impression of an unexpected or untidy handover between the scribes, unless we can imagine that Scribe A was so focused on the full text of the poem that the end of his own work on it did not register by comparison. The end of Scribe A’s writing stint in *Beowulf* is difficult to interpret; certainly, he seems to be less conscious of it than he was of the end of *Alexander*.

81 Though see note 55, above, for Scribe A’s possible copying periods, which I cannot correlate with the pattern shown in Figure 38.

82 Cf. CCCC 419 pp. 320 and 321, where Wilcox finds an illuminator missing out colour, presumably because he turned two pages at once, *ASSMF* 8, p. 3.

83 The others are: 137(BL139)r–139 (BL141)v; 142 (BL144)v–144 (BL146)r; 147a (131) (BL149) r–147 (BL150)v; 153 (BL156)v–154 (BL157)v; 157 (BL160)v–161 (BL164)v.



TABLE 8 *Distribution of Scribe A's capital forms by gathering of Beowulf.*

Gathering	Sides of <i>Beowulf</i> written by Scribe A	Av mC / side	Av MiC / side
5	4	0.50	1.25
6	16	0.31	0.50
7	16	0.31	0.50
8	16	0.38	0.63
9	16	0.31	0.38
10	16	0.25	1.06
11	3	0.33	0.00
Total	87	0.32	0.62

More open to interpretation are passages of *Beowulf* where there is a high and consistent usage. As shown in Table 8, there are unusually frequent minor capitals in gathering 10. This is Scribe A's last full gathering and the one in which extra ruled lines have been added; it may also be the gathering when he was under the most pressure or most closely supervised. Perhaps, then, he is displaying the same tendency to increase his use of presentational devices approaching the end of a piece of work as he does in *Alexander* which then, for whatever reason, drops away in his last few sides – the comparatively empty pages at the start of gathering 11. Within gathering 10, that the two sites of most intense usage are at its start and end enhances this impression of practice connected to the physical and social experience of copying, rather than any engagement with the text.

However, these passages of more intense use, laid out in Table 9, are worth considering more closely. Of seventeen capital forms in sixteen sides of the gathering, seven occur in four consecutive sides. This passage, 163 (BL166) r–164 (BL167)v, with lines 1491b–1591a of *Beowulf*, stands out as unusual even within an unusual gathering. This corresponds fairly precisely with *Beowulf*'s final words to Hrothgar on the edge of the Mere, and the battle with Grendel's Mother up to the moment when she has been despatched and he cuts off Grendel's head. At the end of 164 (BL167)v, "Sona þ gesapon snottre..." ("Immediately they saw that, the wise...") brings us back out of the Mere to the audience gathered around its surface. That is, the sequence with more minor capitals than any other in Scribe A's portion of the text is precisely that which contains the decapitation of two monsters.

TABLE 9 *Four periods of exceptionally high usage of capitalisation in Scribe A's Beowulf.*

Folios	Poetic lines	MiC	4-side av.	Gathering av.
132 (BL134)–133 (BL135)	92–181	6	1.5	0.50
148 (BL151)–149 (BL152)	827b–918a	6	1.5	0.63
163 (BL166)–164 (BL167)	1491b–1591a	7	1.75	1.06
169 (BL172)–170 (BL173)	1777–1874a	5	1.25	1.06

A comparison of this sequence of intensity with other bursts of use in *Beowulf* is illuminating. Including the one discussed above, there are four sequences of four sides which have particularly intense uses of minor capitals, which I define as those in excess of both Scribe A's overall average (0.62 per side) and in excess of the average for the gatherings in which they appear, as shown in Table 9. Figure 39 shows the distribution of minor capitals in Scribe A's portion of the work, and perhaps illustrates the patterns of increased use more convincingly. It is striking that the first three such sequences are all concerned with the same narrative thrust. Poetic lines 92–181 relate celebrations in Heorot and Grendel's first invasion; lines 827b–918a open with Beowulf's satisfaction at defeating Grendel and close immediately after the Danish *scop*'s account of Sigemund and his dragon; the third sequence is that discussed above, containing the final decapitation of Grendel and his Mother. This seems to indicate a pattern where Scribe A uses capitals more frequently in narrative episodes related to the irruption of monsters into the human world, particularly when Grendel is involved.

However, the last group of pages to be highlighted in this way, 169 (BL172) r–170 (BL173)v, covers poetic lines 1777–1874a, with the emotional scene of farewell between Hrothgar and Beowulf. This is the least intense of the four sequences of usage, with an average of 1.25 per side only slightly above the gathering average of 1.06. Here, it is important to note the crudity of a statistical measure not tested for significance: there are five minor capitals across these four sides and just one fewer would take it out of the group of exceptions.<sup>84</sup>

84 A 'significance test' could be applied, using the process of calculating standard deviation as described above. Given the small sample sizes and negligible differences involved here, none of these differences would appear statistically significant.

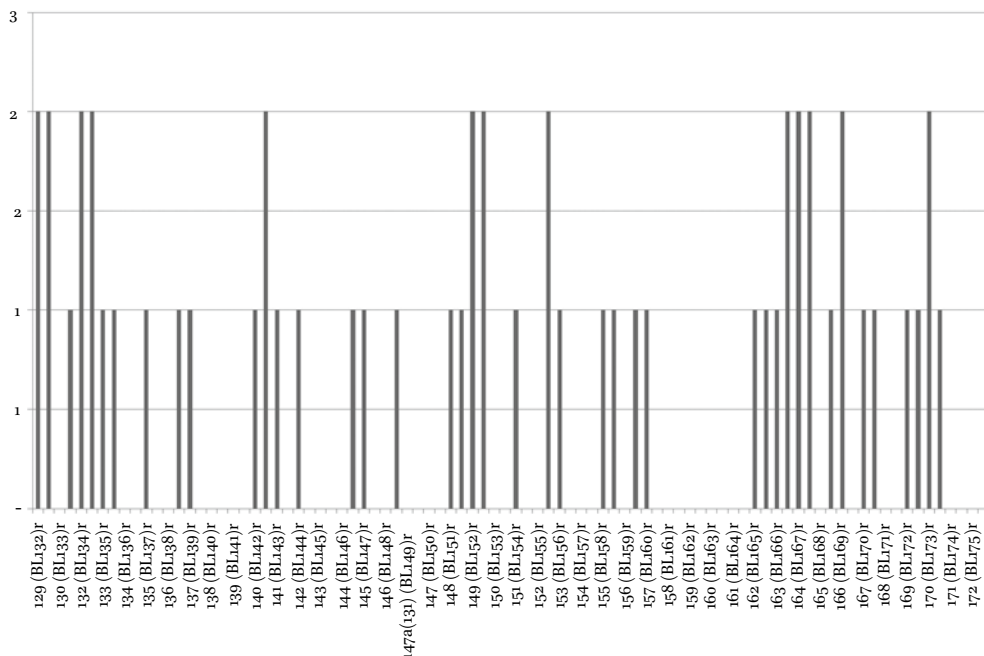


FIGURE 39 *Distribution of minor capitals in Scribe A's Beowulf.*

The passage has no connection with Grendel or other monsters, and there does not seem to be a way to tie it into the matrix of interest suggested above. The easiest explanation is that the clustering is connected to these pages being at the end of the gathering, and perhaps at the end of the last gathering Scribe A expected to copy. It could be argued, however, that this sequence demonstrates the randomness of scribal usage of minor capitals, or their mechanical link with passages that happen to be at the start or end of gatherings, rather than their interpretative connection with textual content.

Supplementing this impression is the fact that what is now the most celebrated monstrous encounter in the poem – Grendel's approach to Heorot and defeat by Beowulf – is not marked at all. From line 702b to 823a (contained in 146 (BL148)r–147 (BL150)v), from the first “Com on panre niht” (“He came in the dark night...”) to Grendel's escape from Beowulf's grasp, there are two marginal capitals (at the start of fitts XI and XII) and just one minor capital, at 146 (BL148)v.5, starting line 723a (“On bræd þa bealo hýdig”). It is unsafe to argue from an absence of evidence: so few capitals in what is today regarded as a crucial sequence do not demonstrate scribal indifference. But it is certainly an interesting contrast with those other highlighted passages.

On the whole, then, the evidence is suggestive but ultimately inconclusive. It is probable that Scribe A was free in all of the texts to use minor capitals where he felt it appropriate to do so; in general, they are deployed at the start of sentences and usually focused on shifts in place or time. It is plausible that he elected to use them primarily in places where he felt a particular interest, and it seems to be the case that his interest was sustained over several sides. What remains unclear from the internal evidence is whether Scribe A's interest is mechanical, focused on the beginnings and endings of his own periods of work; or interpretative, focused on areas of interest to him in the texts.

### Form of Capitals

Bearing in mind the variation in how major capitals are used, it is interesting that the forms used also vary widely.<sup>85</sup> Full comparisons are not possible: *Alexander* does not use major capitals beyond the initial *H*; some letters have been lost to fire damage; and the same capitals are not used in all of the texts. However, it is possible, as in Figure 40, briefly to compare *O* in *St Christopher*,



FIGURE 40

Top to bottom and left to right, *O* forms in *St Christopher* (92(94) (BL95)r), *Wonders* (97(99) (BL100)r) and *Beowulf* (168 (BL171)r); *H* in *St Christopher* (93(91) (BL96)r), *Alexander* (104 (BL107)r), and *Beowulf* (138 (BL140)r); *G* in *St Christopher* (94(92) (BL97)v) and *Beowulf* (164 (BL167)r); resized for comparison.

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85 Malone provides an account of the letter-forms, including capitals, in *Nowell Codex*, pp. 17–23, with some omissions. Contrast Kiernan's argument that the capital forms are consistent through the prose pieces and different in *Beowulf*, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, p. 141.

*Wonders*, and *Beowulf*; *H* in *St Christopher*, *Alexander*, and *Beowulf*; and *G* in *St Christopher* and *Beowulf*.<sup>86</sup> The variation is self-evident. Major capitals in *St Christopher* are rounded and calligraphic, with slight indications of decoration, like the internal triangles in *O* and the lengthened tail to *H*. In *Wonders*, *O* is pointed at each terminus and assumes the almost monumental proportions of most of that text's capitals. In *Alexander*, *H* is plain and clean, calligraphically shaped and with a relatively thin stem that makes it less emphatic than the forms deployed in the preceding text. *Beowulf*'s *G* is angular and uncial; its *O* unsymmetrical and smoothed at top and bottom. Only *H* is close to the form deployed in *St Christopher*. Variation in capital forms is common in the period: as an example, four different *G* forms are used on a single side, fol. 33r, of London, BL, Cotton MS Nero A. i, fols. 3–57, containing the lawcode 11 Cnut, shown in Figure 41. What is unusual in the Nowell Codex is that, where it is possible to compare them, Scribe A's form for each letter and the general style he deploys throughout are consistent within each text, but different from text to text.

There are two capitals in *Wonders* which may have been reworked by the scribe. *O* on 96(98) (BL99)v.19 and *D* on 98(100) (BL101)v.3 are both heavily inked, but I cannot see any evidence for later interaction. It is perhaps possible that Scribe A originally produced letter-forms that were not in line with the rather pointed shapes used in *Wonders* and reworked these capitals in an attempt to bring them into line with the exemplar forms. There seems to be an exception to this general rule in *Beowulf*, from 141 (BL143)r to 152 (BL155)v, where more decorative capitals are used for five of seven forms.<sup>87</sup> The more decorative letters are all *H* or *D*: one more *D* and one occurrence of *N* on 146 (BL148)r and 149 (BL152)r respectively are not embellished. On 156 (BL159)r, as shown in Figure 42, *H* is back to its usual shape, but with a slightly decorative final turn.

This variance in the form of major capitals is not mirrored in minor forms. An obvious instance is *G*, which occurs in *Wonders*, *Alexander*, and *Beowulf* in precisely the same rounded shapes as shown in Figure 43. Minor *S* exhibits the same pattern, appearing in all three texts in the same shape, with the three horizontal lines close together and the final tail somewhat shorter than the others.<sup>88</sup> This is not always the case: *M* in *St Christopher* and *Alexander* are

86 In Figure 40, top to bottom and left to right, majuscule forms are taken from: 92(94) (BL95)r.19; 97(99) (BL100)r.20; 168 (BL171)r.10; 93(91) (BL96)r.7; 104 (BL107)r.1; 138 (BL140)r.13; 94(92) (BL97)v.15; 164 (BL167)r.15.

87 Corresponding to half-way through gathering 7 and then more or less all of gathering 8; poetic lines 409–1050; fitts VIII–XVI.

88 *S*'s are from *St Christopher* 91(93) (BL94)v; *Wonders* 97(99) (BL100)r; *Alexander* 104 (BL107)r.

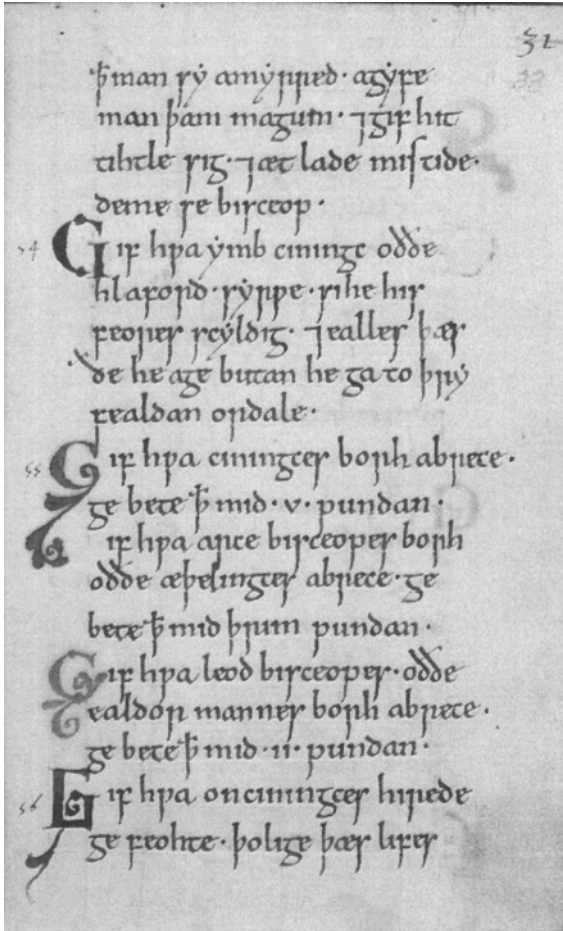


FIGURE 41 Variant G forms on Cotton Nero A. i, fol. 33r.

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different, with those in the former more angular and in the latter more rounded. But the trend is clear: the scribe varies the form of major capitals and uses them differently in each text, and he maintains the form of minor capitals and uses them in similar ways in each text. The conclusion must be that, in keeping with the findings about their respective distribution patterns, major capitals are probably copied from his exemplars, where minor ones are more likely to be introduced by personal choice.<sup>89</sup> This cannot be proved: it is possible that

89 Cf. Junius 85 and 86, as discussed by Jonathan Wilcox, *ASMMF Volume 17: Homilies by Ælfric and Other Homilies*, MRTS 359 (Tempe, AZ, 2008), with a “visual pattern” that “presents



FIGURE 42 *Decorative major capitals in Beowulf, l-r and top to bottom: 141 (BL143)r; 150 (BL153)r; less decorated H from 156 (BL159)r, 145 (BL147)r, 148 (BL151)r, 152 (BL155)v, less decorated D from 146 (BL148)r. Resized for comparison.*

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an earlier scribe performed this role and that Scribe A and perhaps other intervening scribes sought to produce a facsimile of that scribe's work. But that does not seem likely.<sup>90</sup> It is more probable that the texts of the Nowell Codex show us a scribe simultaneously paying quiet homage to his exemplars by following their use and (approximate) form of major capitals, while also, to a degree, applying his own interpretation of texts by introducing his minor capitals. This is an interesting variation on the work of other eleventh-century scribes, who have also been seen to be actively attempting to imitate their exemplars or re-interpreting existing texts in a new way but not, as far as I am aware, both at the same time.<sup>91</sup> This is not to claim Scribe A as a previously unrecognised master of his art – it may indicate his confused and immature approach more than anything else – but it is illustrative of interesting and engaged scribal practice.

a distinct experience for different sections[...]but with some features that recur across the whole collection", pp. 120–121; elsewhere he points out that the only Ælfrician homily in this collection is presented differently and more in line with fuller Ælfrician collections, 'Junius 85 and 86', p. 356; Elliason and Clemons note the difference between their two main scribes' use of capitals in Royal 7 C. xii, p. 22.

90 Though there are examples of this happening: Gameson suggests the possibility of the shape of a volume being passed through several copies resulting in the squareness of Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Reg. lat. MS 1671, probably produced at Worcester around 1000, which likely "owes an indirect debt to an early exemplar", which would have been a late Antique Vergil, 'Book Production at Worcester', pp. 205–208.

91 Some comparable copying projects are discussed further in Chapter 6.



FIGURE 43

*l-r and top to bottom, identical minor G forms from Wonders (100(96) (BL103)r.6), Alexander (123 (BL126)r.5), and Beowulf (135 (BL137)r.5); and minor S forms from St Christopher (91(93) (BL94)r.3), Wonders (97(99) (BL100)r.8), and Alexander (112(120) (BL123)v.6), all resized for comparison.*

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### Explicits and Incipits

Of further interest in this broad question of how the scribe represents his exemplars and the apparent variation between them is how his texts open and close. Scribe A does not copy the end of *Beowulf* and his opening to *St Christopher* is lost, so neither is considered here. Each prose text ends slightly differently. *Alexander* is the most formal, with the word *finis* followed by two mid-line points and a mid-line comma positura on line 7 of its final side. *St Christopher* similarly ends before the final line of the side: this time the last word is on line 17, and is also followed with a punctus with a more angular comma positura than *Alexander*. *St Christopher*, however, does not merit a Latin end-word, simply closing with the last word of the text. It is interesting that both leave a great deal of blank space on their concluding page. If the codex was made in a minor scriptorium, it was not a place overly concerned about the conservation of parchment. And if Boyle's conclusion, of a crisis in copying *Beowulf* caused by poor scribal control over *Wonders*, were true, it would be absolutely extraordinary for Scribe A to have been so profligate as to waste thirteen lines at the end of *Alexander*, on 128 (BL131)v. The impression is of a deliberate attempt to allow each text to stand in its own right: next to, but separate from, its companions.

*Wonders* also finishes a few lines short of a full page after completing its final section, §32, on 103 (BL106)v, which describes the *Sigelwara* (usually translated "Ethiopians").<sup>92</sup> The last word is on line 19 although there is space to fit it onto the end of the previous line: clearly, the scribe is spreading out into the space available though with rather less style than Scribe A of Scheide 71 does on fol. 119v, where the excess of space enables him to end the side in a kind of arrow of text, as shown in in Figure 44. In contrast to the slightly marked endings to *St Christopher* and *Alexander*, there is no punctuation at the end of *Wonders*

92 On this word and its meanings, see Tolkien 'Sigelwara land I' and 'Sigelwara land II'.





FIGURE 44 Poorly managed endings in Nowell, 103 (BL106)v, and Scheide 71 fol. 119v.

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beyond the point, although there is an additional word in red discussed further in Appendix 4. This may not have been the ending of the exemplar's text, but – as above – most likely it was, so very probably the *explicit* has been written as planned, low-key as it seems.<sup>93</sup>

There is a significant difference between the opening of *Wonders* and that of Scribe A's other two texts. *Wonders* opens simply with a marginal capital on 95(97) (BL98)v. As shown in Figure 13, the first image has a more decorative frame than the others; that aside, there is nothing to mark this as the start of a new text. Its position is only certain because it shares a folio with the last page of *St Christopher*, and the other versions of the text open with the same section. By contrast, the openings of *Alexander* on 104 (BL107)r and of *Beowulf* on 129 (BL132)r are marked with a fully capitalised first line, as shown in Figure 45. That is, the *incipits* follow the major capitals in suggesting a certain distance between the prose texts; they also align with linguistic evidence discussed above in bringing *Alexander* and *Beowulf* together.

93 Cf. Michelle Brown, who finds a deliberately produced “effect of diminuendo” in the shortening of the scribal lines, pers. corr. reported in Biggs and Hall, ‘Jamnes and Mambres’, p. 73.



FIGURE 45 The openings of *Alexander* on 104 (BL107)r:1–6, and of *Beowulf* on 129 (BL132)r:1–4.

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However, there are some interesting differences between these two openings. First, although both commence with *H*, that opening *Alexander* is in the margin (following the policy for capitals in *Wonders*) while *Beowulf*'s is within the main text frame. Second, the opening to *Beowulf* seems much more considered and monumental than the less imposing incipit to *Alexander*. Compared with the neat regular lines that follow, the *Alexander* opening looks untidy, almost an afterthought: its minor capitals above the first ruled line contrast with *Beowulf*'s grand major capitals, which fully occupy the first two ruled lines. A somewhat sloppy title is nothing particularly unusual in the period, and *Alexander*'s uncertain opening is reminiscent of the use of titles in a hybrid display script dominated by Rustic Capitals in Wulfstanian working collections, such as the sermons at the back of the York Gospels, or to homilies, laws, and the various sections of *Institutes of Polity* in Nero A. i fols. 70–177.<sup>94</sup> Many of these titles are spaced out to occupy the full length of the line and are articulated in red. They are also most often followed by punctuation before the main text, which itself commences with a marginal or semi-marginal initial. In the York Gospels, titles to both the *Sermo Lupi* on fol. 158r-v and *Be Hæðendome* on fol. 159r are written less neatly than the rest of their respective pages, space letters irregularly, and look rather like afterthoughts. In the *Sermo Lupi*, the

94 Nicholas Barker, ed., *The York Gospels: A Facsimile with Introductory Essays* (London, 1986). Nero A. i is online as part of *Digitised Manuscripts*, at <[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton\\_MS\\_Nero\\_A\\_I](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton_MS_Nero_A_I)>, last visited 1/6/16.

initial *S* of the title is, a little confusingly, much closer to the main text's marginal initial *L* than it needs to be. Similarly, despite a clear scheme to the titles for sections and texts in the well-used Nero A. i, there are a number of headings which are more or less anomalous. The title to *I Æthelstan*, "Æðelstanes Gerædnes" on fol. 86v, is very likely to be an afterthought, squeezed between lines of text and almost running into the initial capital of the main text; its clumsiness is especially marked when compared with the more cleanly spaced "Eadmundes Gerædnes" for *I Eadmund* on fol. 87v; presumably the mistake with the first results in more care being taken with the second, a feature which recurs.<sup>95</sup> The scribes also seem to know that titles should fill a full line, but are not particularly skilful at making them do so: "Be Cýricean" is strangely spaced, with cramped letters but an extended *n*, seemingly when the scribe realised the title would not occupy the full length of the line; the third scribe performs a more extreme version of the same trick on 105r, where "Be Gerefan" occupies about two thirds of the line with the final *N* extended to fill the whole space. The Latin canon law collection and excerpt from Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés which follows is, on the whole, more carefully controlled, possibly indicating closer copying of layout from an exemplar.

There is, of course, a clear difference in that these Wulfstanian sectional headings are titles and the main text beneath begins with an enlarged, partially marginalised and decorated capital. *Alexander* opens with "Her is seo gesege-nis", which is not a title, and cannot have been added much after the main text as the ruling forms the first of a standard twenty lines to the page. However, *gesege-nis* does not make any sense. Editors generally assume an error for *geseten-nis* ("composition, text") as used in line 5 of the same page (where it takes the dative form *gesetenisse*). As written by the scribe, the first seven lines proclaim:

Her is seo ge se genis  
alexandres epistoles þæs miclan kȳnin  
ges ȳþæs mæran macedoniscan þone  
he prat ȳsende to aristotile his magis  
tre bege setenisse indie þære miclan  
þeode · ȳbe þære pidgal nisse his siðfata<sup>96</sup>  
ȳhis fora · þe he geond middan geard ferde

95 Other clumsy titles, perhaps later additions, are "Be Preostan Be Nunnan" on fol. 73v and the title to *V Æthelred*: "Be Angolpitenā Gerednesse" on fol. 116v.

96 At the end of line 6 of the manuscript, where Rypins sees only a "charred margin" (*Prose Texts*, n. 5 p. 1), there is a clear ink mark indicating the curved left side of a letter either *o*, *e*, or *a*. Fulk and Orchard, without comment, print *o*; Rypins prints *a*. In my view, the small amount of the letter that can be seen is more similar to the scribe's standard *a* than

*Here is the <ge se genis> of Alexander's letter, which that great king and famous Macedonian, wrote and sent to Aristotle his teacher about the composition of India that great nation; and about the extent of his travels and his journeys on which he travelled around the world.*

The word I have transcribed as *ge se genis* is printed as *gesetenis* by both Fulk and Orchard.<sup>97</sup> Rypins transcribes *gesegenis* but notes that it is "*gesetenis* in l.5 [of this manuscript page] and elsewhere", implying that he accepts this as an attestation of an unusual spelling for a relatively common word.<sup>98</sup>

Bosworth-Toller offers six usages of *gesetenis*: position in reference to two or more objects; combination or composition; size or extent; scheme or figure of speech; an established practice; a law or decree. If the same word occurs in the first and fifth lines of the text, then it is first used in relation to *epistoles* to mean something like "the text of the letter", and then employed in relation to *indie* to mean something like "the composition of India". This is reasonable and makes sense. However, while not impossible, it is surprising that a scribe would make such a mistake in the very first line of a new text as to write a *G* for a *T* – particularly in such a common word, and one which he used correctly four lines below. Given the proof-reading, it is also strange that such a clear mistake was missed, though it is of course not unbelievable in a codex in which so many clear errors remain.

This situation is made more interesting by the relatively poor execution of the line. Using minor rather than major capitals is not necessarily a weakness, but it is less impressive than the opening of *Beowulf* which it seems to parallel, as illustrated in Figure 45. Unlike the poem's opening, spacing between words here is generous, leaving a gap between almost every syllable. Space is left at the end of the line, where *Beowulf* splits *Garde|na*, maximising the letters that can be capitalised. This may have been avoided in *Alexander* because the split word would have been *alexandres*, but the resultant opening does not look like a grandiose statement. Supplementing this impression, the first couple of letters of the line dip down towards their capital: "Is Seo Ge Se Genis" runs along the (now invisible) ruling, while "ER" is along a line about 25° off the horizontal. It looks as though the scribe is concerned to clarify the connection between the capital *H* and *ER*, rather than with *alexander* on line 2. Possibly

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his *o*, and there seems to be little need to avoid the more common genitive plural ending, particularly as it is used for the grammatically parallel *fora* in the same sentence.

97 On pp. 34 and 224 of their respective editions.

98 *Prose Texts*, n. 1 p. 1. The other occurrences of the word in *Alexander* are on this page at 104 (BL107)r.16 and on 105 (BL108)v.5.

the initial capital was written at some point after the line it introduces and was misplaced. The Wulfstanian titles to *Be Hæðendome, I Æthelstan*, and *V Æthelred* were all probably also written at some point after the main text; the first of these shows us Wulfstan himself supplementing a piece transcribed by another hand. He may have written the title at the same time as making adjustments to the text.<sup>99</sup> By contrast, the *Alexander* text is written by a single hand and is a continuous piece of prose; there is no compelling evidence that makes the title here a later addition, though it may have been. It is perhaps most probable that the first line of the exemplar version of *Alexander* used the same monumental capitals still seen in *Beowulf*; as they almost certainly came from the same exemplar, and as *Alexander* was produced partially with the support of the poem, it is not implausible that their manuscript presentations echoed one another. The less imposing capitals used in Nowell would, therefore, naturally result in the first line being short of letters, forcing the scribe to space it out strangely. It may even have been in red ink or otherwise distinguished, leading the scribe initially to exclude it from his main act of copying.<sup>100</sup> The weak presentation, misreading of *t* for *g*, and use of minor capitals seem to suggest that the line was written in something of a rush. This is all, of course, highly speculative. It is not possible to be certain what happened, nor to identify Scribe A's intentions. What is clear, however, is both the scribe's sense of anxiety that his text be appropriately opened, and his uncertainty about how that should be done.

### Scribe A and the Metre of *Beowulf*

Scribes in the four major codices of Old English poetry all, to varying degrees, make the end of a manuscript side coincide with the end of a poetic verse, as shown in Table 10.<sup>101</sup> Most scribes do this on more than half of the pages

99 Neil Ker, 'The Handwriting of Archbishop Wulfstan', in Ker, *Books, Collectors and Libraries* (1985), 9–26; Simon Keynes, 'The Additions in Old English', *York Gospels*, ed. Barker (1986), 81–100, p. 92.

100 Knock makes a similar argument for an earlier copy of *Wonders* leaving out rubricated words, intending for them to be inserted at a later date, *Synoptic Edition*, p. 105.

101 As noted in Terms Used, a half-line (or poetic verse) is here defined as a minimum of four syllables, scanning according to the metrical rules identified by Sievers and his successors, and normally forming either the on-verse or off-verse of a full poetic line. With the exception of the Nowell Codex texts, I have relied on the ASPR editions to identify half-line breaks. My discussion here follows that in Thomson, "Whistle While You Work".

TABLE 10 *Coincidence of half-line and side endings in the major codices of Old English poetry.*

Manuscript	Text	Written sides	a verse	b verse	total no.	a %	b %	total %
Junius 11	Genesis	116	19	75	94	16.38%	64.66%	81.03%
	Exodus	23	1	18	19	4.35%	78.26%	82.61%
	Daniel	37	2	24	26	5.41%	64.86%	70.27%
	Christ and Satan	17	2	6	8	11.76%	35.29%	47.06%
	<i>S.2 Christ and Satan</i>	3	1	2	3	33.33%	66.67%	100.00%
	<i>S.3 Christ and Satan</i>	13	4	—	4	30.77%	0.00%	30.77%
	<i>S.4 Christ and Satan</i>	1	—	1	1	0.00%	100.00%	100.00%
	<b>Junius 11</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>12.24%</b>	<b>62.76%</b>	<b>75.00%</b>
Nowell Codex	Beowulf	140	36	22	58	25.71%	15.71%	41.43%
	<i>s.A. Beowulf</i>	87	17	12	29	19.54%	13.79%	33.33%
	<i>s.B. Beowulf</i>	53	19	10	29	35.85%	18.87%	54.72%
	Judith	16	3	6	9	18.75%	37.50%	56.25%
	<b>Nowell Codex</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>25.00%</b>	<b>17.95%</b>	<b>42.95%</b>
Vercelli Book	Andreas	46	7	10	17	15.22%	21.74%	36.96%
	Shorter poems	14	2	5	7	14.29%	35.71%	50.00%
	Elene	26	9	6	15	34.62%	23.08%	57.69%
	<b>Vercelli Book</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>20.93%</b>	<b>24.42%</b>	<b>45.35%</b>
Exeter Book	Advent							
	Lyrics	12	1	1	2	8.33%	8.33%	16.67%
	Ascension	13	2	4	6	15.38%	30.77%	46.15%
	Christ in Judgment	24	6	8	14	25.00%	33.33%	58.33%
	Guthlac A	24	8	2	10	33.33%	8.33%	41.67%
	Guthlac B	17	4	3	7	23.53%	17.65%	41.18%
	Three Youths	5	1	2	3	20.00%	40.00%	60.00%
	Phoenix	21	7	5	12	33.33%	23.81%	57.14%
	Juliana	22	6	8	14	27.27%	36.36%	63.64%
	<b>Exeter Book</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>21.54%</b>	<b>23.98%</b>	<b>45.53%</b>

they copy, and some do it much more frequently. This summary is a generalisation rather than a fact: the 'incompetent' scribe of Junius 11's *Christ and Satan*, and Scribe A of *Beowulf* do so only about 30% of the time; it is generally more frequent in the Exeter Book and Junius 11 than in the Nowell Codex and the Vercelli Book. This is in keeping with the general perception that those projects were higher status, and produced with a stronger sense of visual appearance and the needs of users. The highest and most consistent rate is in Junius 11, where the main scribe made his texts work this way on over 80% of pages through *Genesis* and *Exodus*. It is perhaps also interesting that the main scribe of Junius 11, when he makes verse and page ending coincide, overwhelmingly does so for the b-verse or second half of a poetic line where there is less difference in verse treatment shown by scribes in other manuscripts.

Along with the general weight of statistical evidence of this phenomenon are a number of incidences where different scribes have visibly worked hard to end their manuscript page at the end of a half-line. At the end of God's speech to Lot in *Genesis*, line 2513, the scribe ends page 116, leaving enough space at the end of the line for most of line 2514a. His efforts to end the previous manuscript lines at the ends of half-lines are also visible in Figure 46, with the right hand margin only used as an approximate guide and the more important criterion being to end each manuscript line with the end of a half-line. At the end of line 385 of *Exodus* on page 161 of the manuscript (the second image in Figure 46), he achieves the same end but by squeezing text in instead, writing the last three letters of *stigon* beneath the main ruling rather than splitting it across two pages. Another tactic can be seen at line 1866 of *Genesis*, page 89, the last image in Figure 46, where the final word of the poetic line, *geðreadne*, is squeezed into the line, moving the right hand margin much further across than any of the preceding manuscript lines. Nowell Scribe A can be seen making comparable efforts, such as at 133 (BL135)r.20, Figure 47. In order to make the end of the folio coincide with the end of a poetic line, he abbreviates the last two words of poetic line 158, including the unusual use of a tilde to indicate a final *n*.<sup>102</sup> The point following *folmū* serves to emphasise a sense of satisfied completion.

An argument against this proposition is easily made: it may well be the case that many breaks relate to meaning rather than to metrics and are only "coincidentally metrical in shape".<sup>103</sup> It is certainly true in a number of

102 It is conventional to correct and expand to "banan folmum" (even Kiernan amends *ū* to *an*).

103 O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Visible Song*, p. 164, uses this phrase in relation to pointing in the Exeter Book.

yllan. 7 þar folc flān. cynn on  
 pālm þrū. 7 hīr torn pūtan.  
 hī gēþrungstū. gēþrū þu nūstū þm.  
 þeīr fūta milde.

an arctop. ac þon nūh. 7 kon  
 inge hylð bebbad. pē þōdage  
 uete lūde. 7 dðan he gēlūde.  
 haligst hærūm. hāh lond 7 a  
 gon.

ær pūade on gald. hānde mid  
 lona pyn. on gæt hpa. dñe.  
 pæt him palostū pūec. pite  
 him abraham to. eðfū gēdñadne.

FIGURE 46 *Scribal efforts to end a side with the end of a half-line in Junius 11, pages 116, 161, and 89.*

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þorste beorste bote tobanū folmū.

FIGURE 47 *Beowulf line 158, on 133 (BL135)r.20.*

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instances that pages seem to be designed around meaning: in Junius 11 this is particularly noticeable when the scribes leave large gaps at the foot of pages, clearly regarding the immediate 'section' as complete.<sup>104</sup> However, it is also

<sup>104</sup> See for instance pages 3, 12, 13, 16, 40, 50, and 151.



worth noting that in a number of instances, such as that of line 385 of *Exodus*, the break is not semantic. The sentence (as punctuated by Krapp) reads:

Siððan he gelædde    leofost feora  
haliges hæsum;    heahlond stigon  
sibgemagas,    on Seone beorh.

*Then, on the Holy One's orders, he led the most beloved people; the kinsmen climbed the hill to Mount Zion.*

If the meaning mattered above all other considerations, the scribe should have copied poetic line 386 beneath the ruled line;<sup>105</sup> if neither meaning nor metrics mattered, he should have broken *stigon* across pages rather than using an additional line. The same is true of a number of other instances, including lines 270 and 1866 of *Genesis*.

Another instance can be found in the Exeter Book, where fol. 64v ends with line 623a of *The Phoenix*, concluding the side at the end of a verse but in the middle of a sentence. A hypothetical speech, a hymn of praise the author imagines being sung by angels, has just started, with

Sib si þe, soð god,    ond snyttrucræft,  
ond þe þonc sy |    þrymsittendum  
geongra gyfena,    goda gehwylces.<sup>106</sup>

*Peace be with you, true God, and the strength of wisdom, and thanks to you,  
| seated in glory, for your fresh gifts and for every good thing.*

In keeping with the fairly sparse punctuation policy of the Exeter Book, there are very few points on the page. I count five before this final, twenty-second, manuscript line, the others appearing at manuscript lines 5 (twice), 8, 9, and 14.<sup>107</sup> In keeping with standard practice, a point precedes the start of the speech, which also starts with a minor capital. What is interesting here is that the manuscript line ends with line 623a, and where there would be space to

105 The scribe writes *onseone*, which Sisam sees as a copying error indicating lack of engagement with meaning, 'Poetical Manuscripts', p. 37. Neither Krapp nor Lucas record an error here, silently adding the space and capitalisation.

106 *The Phoenix*, lines 622–624. Pipes inserted in Old English and translation are mine, showing the page break.

107 Points follow poetic lines 596a and b, 600b, 602b, 610b. The last two of these are also punctuated by Krapp and Dobbie.

write *þrym*, the first part of the first word of 623b, the scribe instead places a point. There is no break of sense and there can be little doubt that both the point and the break between pages relate to the coincidence of verse and page ending rather than anything else.<sup>108</sup>

Further, if scribes sought to bring sections of meaning to an end at the close of pages, they were not very good at it in prose. In Scribe A's prose texts, there are strikingly few pages where a unit of meaning (a clause, or sentence, or section) comes to an end at the end of a page. It never happens in *St Christopher*. There are three instances in *Wonders*, one of which is on the first page, possibly indicating that it was a desideratum; this is a highly structured text divided into short sections, which should have made it easier to connect semantic breaks with page endings if desired.<sup>109</sup> There is not a single instance in fifty sides of *Alexander*, despite some fairly consistent use of pointing when syntactical units come to an end.<sup>110</sup> That is, in seventy-three sides of prose, the scribe engineers the ending of just three to coincide with a break in a unit of meaning such as a sentence or a section, at a rate of 4.11%.<sup>111</sup> While the proportion of poetic sides coinciding with a metrical or semantic break is hardly compelling in Scribe A's work, it is overwhelming in comparison with the rate of semantic breaks coinciding with side ends in his prose. It is particularly striking that five of the first ten sides of *Beowulf* he copied (129 (BL132)r–134 (BL136)v) end with the end of a full poetic line. Taken together with the manifest intention to produce such breaks in Junius 11, it is clear that scribes sometimes did organise their copying around the content of texts, that they seem to have found it easier to do so when those texts were structured metrically, and, further, that they sometimes (as in the example from *Exodus*) organised their copying on purely metrical criteria. That this feature is consistently used to some degree across all of these texts makes it plausible that these presentational devices had some meaning or value for readers. However, that Scribe A achieved it so relatively infrequently and with such inconsistency shows that it was far from essential in this particular production, and perhaps indicates his lack of skill or experience in producing poetic texts compared with the main hand of Junius

108 The Exeter Book is most readily viewed using Bernard Muir's digital edition, with N. Kennedy, programming, *The Exeter DVD: The Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry* (Exeter, 2006).

109 On 95(97) (BL98)v, 100(96) (BL103)r, and 103 (BL106)r.

110 The modern editions make it look as though there is a sentence ending at the foot of 113(121) (BL124)r, with a new sentence starting "Eall..." on the next page. It is clearly not marked in this way by the scribe, who points shortly before the break taken by the editors, and the last letter of the first word on 113(121) (BL124)v is certainly not *l*.

111 There are seventy-six prose folios, but three are the final pages of pieces and I therefore do not include them in the count here.

11. There are 16 sides where Scribe A includes an additional word from a new half-line, and in an extreme instance the two letters *yr* that start a new verse (1052a) are included at the end of 152 (BL155)v. This makes it clear that space is more important than ending neatly at the conclusion of a verse. So perhaps we may say that Scribe A *prefers* to end his sides with the conclusion of half-lines where it is not disruptive or wasteful to do so.

### Suggestions

Much of what is being suggested here is about the scribe making minor adjustments to his hand and the copying process in response to the texts, the presentation of the exemplars, and the directions he has been given. It is very difficult to prove this beyond the fairly broad analysis of numbers combined with close discussion of some specific instance, as attempted here, because the presumed variation in the size and shape of letters and of their spacing is so tiny. In this manuscript, the task is made significantly harder – and is perhaps impossible – due to the damage of the parchment from the 1731 fire and subsequent treatments. However, the analysis of scribal hands using computer technology raises some new possibilities. Peter Stokes and Stewart Brookes of King's College London's *DigiPal* project have catalogued a vast number of letter-forms and the types of variation in them. Over time, this may enable a more precise consideration of the types of variation scribes show at different times, and perhaps enable a more detailed understanding of how and why one hand varies in a text or group of texts. The University of Groningen's GIWIS (Groningen Intelligent Writer Identification System) uses forensic handwriting analysis software to calculate the regular shapes and sizes of parts of letters used by scribes. The current objective is to be able to identify known scribes' performance in otherwise unidentified texts. It should be possible, however, to use the same technology for a micro-analysis of scribal performance within a single text: to calculate, for instance, the range in letter sizes and spacing between folios and gatherings or the average letter size at the start and end of folio lines. It may, for instance, have simply been the case that Scribe A's normal hand was very slightly too expansive, and that he had to be very focused if he were to constrain the size of his letters as this task required.

Perhaps Scribe A had expectations of his readers that we cannot now fulfil.<sup>112</sup> Certainly, in terms of capitalisation, *incipits*, and *explicits*, the prose texts all vary from one another and from *Beowulf*, often in subtle ways. Many of these

<sup>112</sup> The difficulty in interpreting scribal intention is also evident in his various accent marks, as Malone notes in *Nowell Codex*, pp. 30–31; cf. Thomson, 'Manuscript Stability'.

variations suggest different exemplars, as already proposed in Chapter 2. This suggests that Scribe A was, to some degree, conscious of the process of engaging with and re-presenting his exemplars in what became the Nowell Codex. It is clear that Kiernan's argument that the prose texts were an unregarded project does not stand up. Instead, Scribe A appears to be working hard, if not consistently and certainly not always successfully, to correct mistakes that he has made and to resolve difficulties with all of his texts. He sometimes seems to be actively echoing what he finds in exemplars, to the extent of imitating variant capital forms. Doubtless, he struggled with the images in *Wonders* – hardly surprising, as this codex almost certainly contains a reorganisation of the text and is highly ambitious in layout. He seems to have also been challenged by more usual events such as trying to keep text within margins and copying repetitive passages. Scribe A's portion of the Nowell Codex looks increasingly like an ambitious project to bring disparate texts together, to adapt them from their source manuscripts, and to present them side by side, while preserving elements of their original production. That Scribe A was not entirely up to the task may indicate that his scriptorium's ambition exceeded its resources.

The relative frequency with which Scribe A gets himself into difficulties suggests that the oversight which was almost certainly in place was not as rigorous as it might have been. Taken with the innovative layout of *Wonders* and Scribe A's relatively modern hand, it is possible to speculate that his personality and ambition played a part in the passages when no other eyes seem to have looked over his work until it was too late. Further, that a scribe was working alongside an older man, that his work was being overseen and guided – but that this guidance was given too intermittently to avoid difficulties – opens up some room to speculate about the scriptorium environment. The relatively low-grade scale and quality of the Nowell Codex has led to a general assumption that it was produced at a minor house, and possibly a secular household, which both still seem plausible. It is worth noting, however, that this production involved both an innovative, perhaps immature, young scribe and an older scribe with an old-fashioned hand. That Draughtsman A apparently lent assistance with some (but not all) images that could not be made to fit the space is an interesting analogy. Taken together, the less competent draughtsman and the less consistent scribe both being given occasional, but not consistent, supervision and guidance of some kind, makes the Nowell Codex look almost like an apprenticeship.<sup>113</sup> This is perhaps most likely to take place at a large

113 Cf. Gullick, 'How Fast Did Scribes Write?', pp. 231 & 236; Jolly, *Community of St Cuthbert*, pp. 155–162, whose study of Scribe B's interactions with Aldred in Durham A.IV.19 is a clear instance of close supervision.

and well-established house with many people working on their own projects, where scribes with the newest hands still needed correction and management but could be given a relatively free rein when working on less significant codices.<sup>114</sup> It could also, of course, have occurred in a new house, or in a secular environment that was developing its capacity for book production; the gospel-books produced for Judith of Flanders were probably made in one of her households and display multiple scribal and artistic hands working together in sometimes idiosyncratic ways.<sup>115</sup> That there do appear to be some specific, and fairly demanding, ideas that Scribe A works towards, and that at least some aspects of his work appear rushed, may imply that the codex had been commissioned. This is well into the realm of uninformed conjecture. The evidence tells a firm story of a scribe who mostly knew what he had to do, and found it difficult to do it. The next chapter considers the work of Scribe B.

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114 But cf. Jolly's note that a manuscript being a "workbook[...]" should not cause us to devalue the relevance of the texts", *Community of St Cuthbert*, p. 79.

115 McGurk and Rosenthal, 'Gospelbooks of Judith', pp. 280–288; Dockray-Miller, *Judith of Flanders*, pp. 30–37. The manuscripts are Morgan M.708; Morgan M.709; Monte Cassino MS 437; Fulda, Historisches Landesbibliothek MS Aa.21.

## Scribe B's Performance

Scribe B copied the last third or so of *Beowulf*, and the extant portion of *Judith*. As I have suggested above, following Lucas, these two texts probably came from different exemplars. In my reading, *Judith* was an integral part of the volume from its inception and came from the same exemplar as *St Christopher*. *Beowulf* came from an exemplar which also contained *Alexander*. As we have seen in Chapter 2, *Judith* initially preceded the prose texts, with other texts now lost to either side, and was moved to its current position at the end of the codex, most likely at some point in the sixteenth century. That Scribe B's work originally bookended A's, that he uses an older script, and that he made at least twelve corrections to Scribe A's work on *Beowulf* has all been taken to show both that he was an older man and had some status as an overseer or at least senior partner in the process of production.<sup>1</sup> It is not necessary to move from this perception of Scribe B towards Kiernan's image of him as a revising, poetic scribe. The appearance of an imbalance between the scribes, with only 69 extant sides copied by B and 163 copied by A, is misleading in that the original codex contained at least one other text (preceding *Judith*), and probably another (following *Judith*) which were both copied by the older man. Scribe B thereby bookended his colleague's work as well as correcting some of his errors, and may have worked on some of the more challenging parts of *Beowulf*'s exemplar. This certainly makes him look like a supervising figure. However, this is complicated by Scribe A being given texts from three different exemplars, including the difficult illustrated *Wonders* and the bulk of *Beowulf*, which both scribes found more challenging than their other texts.<sup>2</sup> Scribe B also makes a number of errors and – if my suggestion of production around 1017–1020 is accepted – is working in an outdated style. It may also be the case that a third hand makes corrections to his text. On balance, I follow Dumville

1 See for example Orchard, *Companion*, p. 46. Compare CCCC 41, of which Gameson argues the senior scribe both commenced the text and effected the join between stints, 'Material Fabric', n. 106 p. 41; and Durham A.IV.19, which Jolly demonstrates as, in places, closely supervised by Aldred, *Community of St Cuthbert*, e.g. pp. 155–162; cf. the general comments in Gullick, 'How Fast Did Scribes Write?', pp. 231 & 236; seniority and scribal sharing is further discussed in Chapter 6.

2 Cf. Jolly on Scribe B being given some challenging Latin to copy in Durham A.IV.19 as perhaps an attempt to focus on his copying skills regardless of sense, *Community of St Cuthbert*, pp. 155 & 159.



FIGURE 48

*Stray lines and weak letter formation on 193 (BL197) r.6 and 203 (BL206)r.14.*

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in finding it more likely that the two scribes were closer to working in partnership than as a supervisor and apprentice, although there is not enough evidence to make a firm assertion either way.<sup>3</sup>

Scribe B's hand is described in Chapter 2, but in this context it is worth briefly noting his apparently slighter interest in visual appearance, which make his pages less attractive and has resulted in some negative aesthetic evaluations of his work.<sup>4</sup> His writing is thicker and heavier than his colleague's and so his pages have more ink on them and look crowded. It has been suggested that Scribe B sometimes prefers to use *ð* rather than *þ* where the latter's descender or ascender might interfere with letters above or below.<sup>5</sup> In general, however, he seems unconcerned about ascenders and descenders touching one another. They frequently cross, and his larger letter shapes means that the spaces between his lines are significantly less than those of Scribe A.<sup>6</sup> It may be surprising that Scribe B uses the same line spacing as Scribe A, for it is poorly suited to his hand.<sup>7</sup> Adding to the generally heavy and uneven appearance of his pages, Scribe B shows none of Scribe A's concerns about violating the

3 Dumville, 'Beowulf Come Lately', p. 50.

4 See e.g. Dumville, 'Beowulf Come Lately', p. 50.

5 Klegraf, 'Faithful Copying', pp. 215–216. He calls this Upper Line Interference (ULI).

6 Though note Dumville, 'Beowulf Come Lately', who sees Scribe A's hand as characterised by "extended ascenders and descenders", p. 50.

7 Doane makes a similar point, though he suggests that B "carries on with Scribe A's layout" where I see him using it simultaneously from the outset of the project, 'Scribal Performance', p. 66. Gerritsen finds that, while the ruled dimensions are more or less consistent throughout the codex, rulings for B tend to be wider than those for A (apart from in *Wonders*), 'Supplementary',

right-hand margin. He does, however, observe the left-hand margin with absolute precision: ascenders are often drawn along the marginal ruling.<sup>8</sup> At odds to some degree with the picture of Scribe B as senior, experienced, and in control is the relative weakness of pen control evident in the details of many letter-forms. On 193 (BL197)r.6, Figure 48, a stray line appears to be tracing the tail of *a* in *land*, and there is a gap in its first stroke where it is met by the tail of *l*. This is probably caused by a disturbance to the nib from the seam in the parchment which the top of *a* is drawn over. Similarly, on 203 (BL206)r, also in Figure 48, a gap appears in the bottom stroke of *æ* following incompletely formed *p* and *þ*. These gaps can occur when a pen is low on ink, but it is surprising that he continues to write for so long without recharging.<sup>9</sup> A similar stray line can be seen in his marginal capital *S* on 183 (BL186)r. Minor flaws of this kind are relatively frequent in Scribe B's hand, and non-existent in Scribe A's. They may be functions of his heavier weight on the page, and probably a thicker nib: they form a cumulative impression of a certain lack of care for his tools and a disregard for visual appearance. In the same category are the apparent pen trials – including a scratchy *g* – at the foot of 182 (BL185)r, Figure 49, which are heavy enough to have imprinted on the facing page, and the occasional ugly blotching of letters such as the *e* of *sercean* on 189 (BL193)v.20. The inconsistency in his letter-forms of *s* and *y*, noted in Chapter 2 and shown in Figure 3, may also indicate that this scribe is less assured than the assumption of his seniority implies.<sup>10</sup>

This chapter broadly follows the same pattern as the preceding one. I consider corrections made by the scribe to his own and to Scribe A's work, and suggest a general picture of *Beowulf* as a challenge for them both. This moves

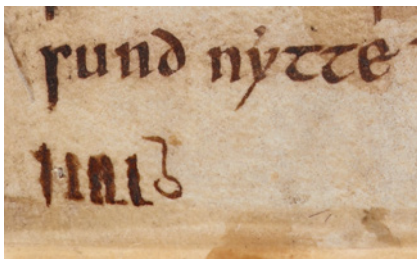


FIGURE 49

*Pen trials immediately beneath text at the foot of 182 (BL185)r.*

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p. 199. As noted in Chapter 2, precise measurements of line rulings is controversial and probably impossible to a high degree of accuracy given the warping of the parchment in the fire.

8 Also noted by Klegraf, 'Faithful Copying', p. 215.

9 I am grateful to Cheryl Jacobsen for discussing these letter-forms with me.

10 Though cf. the argument that Eadui Basan's work on the Harley 603 Psalter is weak because it came late in his career, Noel, *Harley Psalter*, pp. 137–138 and refs.



on to a discussion of the density of Scribe B's copying, with particular focus on some pages early in his copying of *Beowulf* where he adds an additional line of text. These pages have been the focus of some critical attention, and I argue against the current consensus, following Boyle, that his compression was a correction of Scribe A's earlier profligacy. There is less to consider about his *incipits* and *explicit*s than for Scribe A, as no *incipits* in his hand survive, and neither does the *explicit* to *Judith*, which has been copied from Scribe B's original in a sixteenth-century hand. The endings to *Beowulf* and *Judith* are therefore briefly discussed at the end of this section on the density of his work. Since Kiernan's argument about the palimpsest folio, suggesting that it represents a late revision of the text of the poem by Scribe B, it is essential for all students of the codex to engage with this page and the difficulties that surround it. I briefly review past discussions and available evidence, and suggest that the page may have less to do with Scribe B and more to do with later readers and writers. Moving on from these two controversial areas, I return to the discussion begun in Chapter 4 about the use of capitals in the texts. I seek to show that Scribe B follows the same pattern as Scribe A with marginal forms, and that this indicates a broadly similar approach to the project from both scribes. This discussion moves on to an exploration of Scribe B's much more sparing use of minor capitals, and some implications they may have for his interests. Finally, I note some ways in which Scribe B shows his awareness of the reader in both *Beowulf* and *Judith*. Overall, I find that, despite their apparently quite different ages and levels of experience, Scribes A and B worked in very similar ways. Their closeness, in fact, is much more noticeable than their differences – an idea not entertained by most discussions which seek to construct a hierarchy or even a diametrical opposition between the scribes, rather than see them as engaged in the same process. Following the same methodology as in Chapter 4, I compare Scribe B's work on *Beowulf* with both his own work on *Judith*, and with Scribe A's work on *Beowulf*. *Judith* is now a little short for many useful comparisons to be made, and is only one text: these comparisons are not as productive as those that can be made between Scribe A's four texts. However, the process of triangulation seeks to identify conscious decisions he made during his work. I will not repeat discussions of methodology, merely presenting findings and conclusions here.

### Corrections

Despite the assumption of Scribe B's heightened familiarity with the text which he and A both worked on, corrections are just as frequent in his part of

*Beowulf* as in Scribe A's, as shown in Table 11. I count 111 corrections in Scribe A's 87 sides of *Beowulf* at a rate of 1.29 per side, compared with 69 in Scribe B's 53 sides at 1.3 per page. That is, the mistakes they detected themselves making in the poem occur at about the same rate, suggesting that they represented the exemplar in fairly similar ways, and struggled with it to the same extent – or that they felt equal pressure from another source to demonstrate active proof-reading. Both scribes also found their other texts comparatively straightforward: Scribe A made 47 corrections on 50 sides of *Alexander* at 0.94 per side; 7 in 17 sides of *Wonders* at 0.41 per side; and 8 in 9 sides of *St Christopher* at 0.89 per side.<sup>11</sup> Scribe B made just 14 corrections in the 16 sides of *Judith* at 0.88 per side. The evidence thus suggests that *Beowulf* was regarded by both scribes as a more challenging text. This is not to subscribe to Lapidge's idea of an eighth-century exemplar which the scribes found difficult to follow.<sup>12</sup> As I have argued elsewhere, the evidence of corrections conflicts with any notion that the Nowell scribes worked from an exemplar in which they could not read specific letter-forms.<sup>13</sup> Their exemplar may have been damaged, or they may have found it overwhelming to tackle such a long text dealing with the historic past and containing a large number of unusual words. Whatever the reason, *Beowulf* presented a challenge to this scribal team.

TABLE 11     *Corrections in the texts of the Nowell Codex.*

Text	Scribal corrections	Corrections per side
<i>St Christopher</i>	8	0.78
<i>Wonders</i>	7	0.41
<i>Alexander</i>	47	0.94
Scribe A's <i>Beowulf</i>	96	1.1
Scribe A's <i>Beowulf</i> (including Scribe B's corrections)	111	1.29
Scribe B's <i>Beowulf</i>	69	1.3
<i>Judith</i>	14	0.88

11 See my list of corrections in Appendix 3 and Table 4.  
12 Lapidge, 'Archetype'.  
13 Thomson, 'Scribes, Sources, and Readers', esp. pp. 65–68. This is not necessarily to say that an earlier copy was not made from an eighth-century exemplar, a possibility for which Lapidge allows. See also pp. 33–34 above.

This picture is reinforced by the lack of evidence that Scribe B proof-read the prose texts. This is either because the prose texts were a different project (as Kiernan argued), or because the scribes cared less about them (as Kiernan still argues), or – as suggested here – because the scribes knew that they would make more mistakes with *Beowulf* than with the other pieces.<sup>14</sup> As discussed in Chapter 4, the notion that Scribe A was not at all interested in the prose texts is refuted by the evidence of his many corrections there: he was clearly working to produce a satisfactory text by someone's standards. It seems most likely that Scribe B looked through Scribe A's work on *Beowulf* because he, or someone else, knew that the long and old poem was more likely to lead to errors. Perhaps Scribe A asked his colleague to look through it for him. That there is no evidence for A doing so for B's work adds to the impression that B was the senior scribe. That Scribe B makes no effort to change spellings that he shows a strong preference for in his own work, and that he makes relatively few corrections to what remains a clearly problematic text, seems to suggest that he did not have particularly strong feelings about this supervisory role or was not very good at it.<sup>15</sup> Either way, all editors think that the scribes' collective effort left a large number of errors uncorrected, and do not regard either scribe's work as more accurate. Kiernan's self-consciously conservative edition makes 91 alterations to the manuscript text; Mitchell and Robinson's, which also seeks to follow the manuscript where possible, makes (by Orchard's count) more than 300.<sup>16</sup> By way of comparison, Birte Kelly identified 412 sites of emendation on which most editors since 1950 are agreed; many more have been suggested since that date by individuals such as Alfred Bammesburger, but also by the increased use of emendation on metrical grounds argued for by Fulk.<sup>17</sup> The extent of the

14 Kiernan, *'Beowulf' Manuscript* throughout, e.g. p. 9. Neidorf also treats scribal correction as evidence of concern, suggesting that "self-corrections suggest that the scribes were worried about their problems with names." 'Scribal Errors of Proper Names', p. 252.

15 Though cf. Jolly's close discussion of Durham A.IV.19, fol. 61r, where Aldred can be seen making specific corrections to Scribe B's letter formation at line 14, and must have "walked away or ceased to focus on that particular issue" by line 20, where the scribe reverts to his square *a* form. It is also worth noting Jolly's sense of the supervision as focusing on specific issues with Aldred apparently ignoring omissions from the exemplar in favour of correcting what has been copied: his 'lessons' seem to have had specific foci. *Community of St Cuthbert*, pp. 156–158.

16 See Orchard's discussion and refs, *Companion*, pp. 42–44.

17 Kelly's findings are reported in 'Formative Stages Parts I and II', with useful summarising tables in 'Part II', at p. 270. For a clear summary of Fulk's views on emendation in *Beowulf*, see his 'Textual Criticism', *A 'Beowulf' Handbook*, eds. Robert E. Bjork and John D. Niles (Exeter, 1997), 35–54, esp. pp. 40–43; compare the discussion with references in Fulk *et al.*,

corrective work in Nowell, however, and the fact that at least two correctors (Scribe A and Scribe B) made detailed alterations to Scribe A's portion, broadly suggests that wherever the production team could get things right, they did.<sup>18</sup> This makes it likely either that their exemplar was faulty at a number of points, or that it was damaged, or both.

Editorially perceived textual errors are untrustworthy evidence for exemplar versions and copying processes. They have to be identified by a construction of an ideal text, and even then they show only changes between that original ideal (which may never have existed) and the version we have: nothing at all is revealed about the relationship between the version we have and the exemplar(s) used to create it. It is the corrections scribes make that show us scribes trying to reproduce what they had in front of them, not the errors we think they left in.<sup>19</sup> It is perhaps particularly interesting that Scribe B – or perhaps someone else, as discussed further below – seems to make a number of mistaken corrections, unnecessarily converting *e* to *æ* by caudata on four occasions: 173 (BL176)v.4 & 11, 176(BL179)v.20, and 188 (BL191)v.19. These are fairly close to one another in the manuscript, and are all in the same shape and shade of ink, so were probably performed at the same time. It is hard to explain what the scribe thought he was doing here; in his notes to the respective lines, Kiernan notes that the corrections exist and are not necessary, and therefore assumes another meaning for the mark but this does not seem tenable. It seems certain that someone is seeking to correct and is doing so badly. Scribe A also makes mistakes with corrections: on 110(118) (BL121)v.14 he mistakenly converts *þ* to *p* when he should have done so on line 11, though of course it is only an assumption that erasures in his work were by his hand. Scribe A's mistake speaks of mechanical alteration: knowing there is a cross-piece to erase on a side and erasing the first one to be noticed. An addition is rather more deliberate and requires a specific motivation; I would suggest that it is most likely that the corrector saw or thought he saw *æ* in his exemplar in each of

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*Klaeber's 'Beowulf'*, pp. clxxxviii–cxv in which, incidentally, this approach is not generally followed. There is a wide literature on the editing of *Beowulf*; see e.g. Fred C. Robinson, *The Editing of Old English* (Oxford, 1994); for a range of views see the pieces in Vincent Gillespie and Anne Hudson, eds., *Probable Truths: Editing Medieval Texts from Britain in the Twenty-First Century*, Texts and Transitions 5 (Turnhout, 2013). On *Beowulf*, see Orchard's discussion of emendations and different approaches to the text, *Companion*, pp. 42–44 and refs.

18 Cf. Neidorf, who follows Kiernan's assertion of "intelligent scrutiny" (*'Beowulf' Manuscript*, p. 191) and argues that "the remaining errors reflect a genuine gap in the scribes' knowledge", 'Scribal Errors for Proper Names', p. 252; cf. p. 258.

19 See also Thomson, 'Scribes, Sources, and Readers', p. 66.

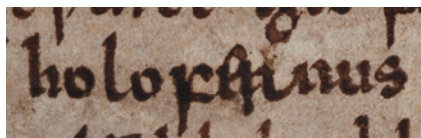


FIGURE 50

Corrected holofernus on 199 (BL202)v.7.

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these places and therefore added the caudatas. Following the exemplar then becomes excessively significant: correcting a text to exemplar forms rather than making sense goes well beyond faithful copying, something we certainly see him doing in at least one site.<sup>20</sup>

There is no evidence that Scribe B found *Judith* particularly challenging to copy. Given Neidorf's discussion of errors with names in *Beowulf*, it is perhaps interesting that on 199 (BL202)v.7, in Figure 50, Holofernes' name was first written without medial *r*. The *e* has been written with an extended tail, as if it were the last letter of a word, and *r* added over this tail. It is not Scribe B's usual practice to extend the tail of *e*, whether at the end of a word or not. Possibly, therefore, he was imitating something he saw in his exemplar, such as an extravagant *e* at the end of a line. It is also interesting that *e* is (correctly) converted to *æ* with a caudata on 202 (BL205)v.18, shown in Figure 51. The correction is probably Scribe B's: it is similar in shape to the caudata he uses to convert *a* to *æ* on 176 (BL179)v.20, and the ink is more or less the same as used for the word. The scribe originally wrote *forleten* for what would normally be *forlæton* and seems to have made some effort to convert the second *e* to *o* without going as far as scraping off the middle bar as well as inserting the caudata. It is also, perhaps, interesting that this word occurs on a folio of *Judith* which has three corrections, or four if the two changed letters in *forlæton* are counted separately, which is far above the average for the text of 0.88 per side. On line 10, *peal* is inserted in a different shade of ink indicating a proof-reading stage. The next line down has a somewhat botched job of converting *r* to *l* in *heoldon*. Like the converted *e*, no effort has been made to scrape away the extraneous line: legibility was the only goal. This collection of problems on a single side within a text which has few corrections overall perhaps suggests a bad day for the scribe rather than any wider challenge, although the exemplar may have been damaged at this point, or perhaps it had *forleten* or a similar form which Scribe B initially reproduced but then worked to correct.<sup>21</sup>

20 For faithful and other approaches to copying, see Thomson, "Whistle While You Work", pp. 106–111.

21 I am grateful to Stewart Brookes for this suggestion.

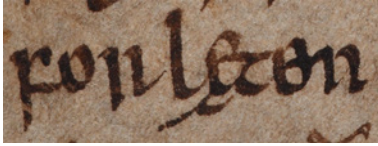


FIGURE 51

*Doubly corrected forlæton on 202 (BL205)v.18.*

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When working on *Beowulf*, indeed, much of Scribe B's energy seems to be focused on trying to represent a difficult exemplar with accuracy. This is most evident in his attempts to copy terms that he probably did not understand: more explicable, certainly, than his apparent fidelity to incorrect exemplar forms with words he surely knew. At poetic line 2921, editorial *Merewioingas milts* ("the mercy of the Merovingian") is represented in the manuscript at 193 (BL197)r.10, Figure 52, as *mere pio ingasmilts* (originally written *ingannilts*). Both the scribe's initial miscopying, and his breaking of the word into small but meaningless units, suggests that he recognised that he did not understand it; that he transmitted it nonetheless demonstrates remarkable determination to record the exemplar.<sup>22</sup> The same is true of the conversion of editorial *Ongenþeoes* into scribal *on gen þeo es* (poetic line 1971; 173 (BL176)r.11). The scribe's choice lay between amending the word(s) he read into something more familiar, substituting something based on his own knowledge, or recording as far as possible precisely what he saw in the manuscript, or (in this instance) possibly what he heard being read to him.<sup>23</sup> In both instances, that he makes a correction – changing *n* to *s* in *ingasmilts* and vice versa in *ongenþeoes* – suggests careful checking of what he has written against the exemplar: an awareness that he may have got something wrong and a determination to represent it as accurately as he could. As Neidorf observes, the spacing here is surely an attempt at precision, whether it was contained in the exemplar or was Scribe B's innovation. This broadly suggests that where he has clearly been consciously active in our copy it is likely to be an accurate representation of what he saw in the exemplar – or at least, as accurate a representation as he was able to produce. This does not mean that he does not make superficial errors when less focused. However, it does mean that, where a correction shows that he has been paying attention, we can rely on his representation of the

22 Leonard Neidorf, 'Scribal Errors for Proper Names', p. 255 and notes; Gerritsen, "'Have With You to Lexington!'", p. 23; Shippey, 'Merov(ich)ingian Again', esp. pp. 399–402.

23 It is clear from the high numbers of corrected errors that are attributable to eye-skip and similar visual mistakes that most of the text was copied by looking at an exemplar, but that does not rule out a dictation stage. See Appendix 3 for my attribution of errors and cf. Orchard's Appendix in 'Reading *Beowulf*'.

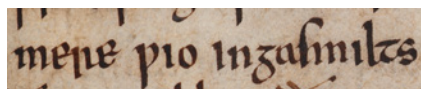


FIGURE 52

Scribe B's mere pio ingasmitls on 193 (BL197)  
r.10.

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exemplar. I find no clear evidence that he sought to improve on his exemplars at any point, though *forleten* → *forlæton* may represent such as instance.

This concern with the accuracy of their joint scribal version is reflected in Scribe B's corrections to his colleague's work. I see fifteen sites of corrective activity that may be his in Scribe A's part of *Beowulf*; there are apparently no corresponding corrections made by A in B's part.<sup>24</sup> Not all of these are certain, however: Orchard notes thirteen.<sup>25</sup> Both he and Kiernan regard that on 159 (BL162)v.14 as the work of neither scribe but of a later reader, and the one on 170 (BL173)r.5 as the work of Scribe A. Both of these positions are reasonable. However, the first, a mark like a horizontal apostrophe above *pelhpylcra*<sup>26</sup> (presumably indicating that the *r* should be omitted), is similar in shape, though not in execution, to a mark used by Scribe B on 199 (BL202)r.10 in *Judith*, which indicates terminal *-us* in *holoferm*, both shown in Figure 53. This is a different purpose for the same mark: it is still highly possible that it was made by a later corrector who selected only this place to make an identifiable mark. But as Scribe B is known to have both used a similar shape, and to have corrected the text, I cautiously attribute it to him. The second, adjusting *pac* to *pat* on 170 (BL173)r.5, could be by Scribe A as Orchard suggests. But the ink shade is different and, with Kiernan, I would also attribute it to Scribe B. Doane says that he sees "a dozen emendations B made to A's work": the one example he gives is *sce deninge* to *scedenigge* on 167 (BL170)r.1, which I do not see and which is not recorded in Appendix 3, albeit the first *g* is poorly written and may have been emended by A.<sup>27</sup>

24 Although there are some corrections to B's work that are not typical of his approach and might indicate a third scribe's interventions. I am not at all certain that the change on 158 (BL161)v.15 is by Scribe B, but I have recorded it as such in my counts as it is universally agreed on by other readers.

25 *Companion*, n. 147 p. 46, and 'Reading *Beowulf*'. I include here 160 (BL163)r.17, where Scribe B makes a mark of insertion but does not add any text. As this is not a correction as such, Orchard does not list it in *Companion*. He also omits 167 (BL170)v.10, *ferpe* → *ferhpe*, which is included in 'Reading *Beowulf*' and about which there can be no doubt. Presumably following *Companion*, Fulk et al., *Klaeber's 'Beowulf'*, give the same list at n. 1 p. xxxiii.

26 Kiernan calls it a "high s-like mark" in his notes to *Electronic 'Beowulf'*.

27 Doane, 'Scribal Performance', p. 72. Kiernan records it as a correction by Scribe A in *Electronic 'Beowulf'*. Neidorf sees a correction here but does not attribute it to Scribe B;

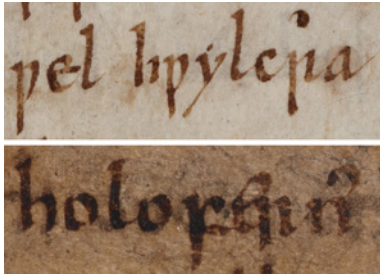


FIGURE 53

Mark of omission in Scribe A's work (159 (BL162)v.14) and of abbreviation in Scribe B's (199 (BL202)r.10), both perhaps by Scribe B.

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These minor scholarly disagreements aside, given the number of certain changes made by Scribe B it is entirely possible that some erasures in Scribe A's work are also by him, but it is of course not possible to identify an erasing hand. Equally, it is possible that erasures in the prose texts were his. As things stand, however, the only text with evidence of Scribe B correcting his colleague's work is *Beowulf*. Kiernan suggests this is evidence of Scribe B's semi-authorial relationship with the poem. On purely internal evidence, however, this does not seem likely. On 160 (BL163)r.17, B writes an insertion mark after *hafelan* but gives no extra word.<sup>28</sup> A word is required by the metre, and editors are left to choose their own: Kemble selected *hydan*; Klaeber chose *beorgan*; Kiernan goes with *hafenian*.<sup>29</sup> If the scribe were using the exemplar in the corrective process, that copy may have been equally defective or unreadable; above, I have noted sites where Scribe B seems not to understand the exemplar and to record what he sees as objectively as he can. Doane argues that the gap was deliberately left, with the mark there to indicate that the reader should "supply whatever came to mind": "[a]pparently Scribe B's more nearly oral approach did not demand hard-and-fast textual solutions."<sup>30</sup> This does not seem likely: Scribe B's corrections both to his own and to A's work are mostly "cosmetic", which shows little sign of Doane's indifference to appearance provided the sense can be worked out.<sup>31</sup> Scribe B's apparent confidence in what he was doing – even confident enough to note where a verse was incomplete – initially lends weight to Kiernan's thesis that he had an authorial relationship with the

he refers to "the scribe", implying that he sees Scribe A's hand, 'Scribal Errors for Proper Names', pp. 258–259. Orchard does not see a correction.

28 The editors of Klaeber's *Beowulf* see this as an aberrant punctuation mark. It is poetic line 1372.

29 As discussed by Orchard, *Companion*, pp. 46–48.

30 'Scribal Performance', p. 71. Contrast the general assumption in Neidorf, where uncorrected errors indicate "genuine gaps in the scribes' knowledge" rather than a deliberate indifference, 'Scribal Errors for Proper Names', pp. 252 & 258.

31 Fulk et al., *Klaeber's 'Beowulf'*, p. xxxiii.



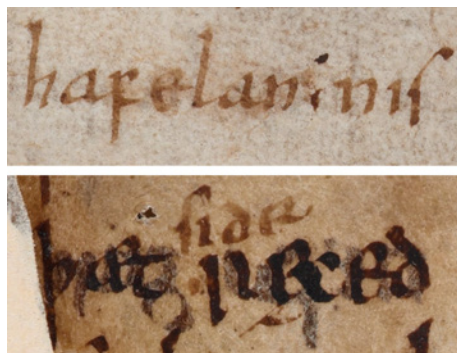


FIGURE 54

Scribe B's mark of insertion in Scribe A's work on 160 (BL163)r.17 and actual insertion in his own, with a caudata added perhaps by a third hand, on 173 (BL176)v.4.

text.<sup>32</sup> But the likelihood that he was confident to identify an incomplete verse, yet not to complete it, surely demonstrates that he felt a responsibility to represent the text which he was not always able to honour.

This instance contrasts with a correction he makes to his own work on 173 (BL176)v.4, Figure 54. Into another incomplete verse, he inserts the superscript word *side* between *geond þæt* and *reced*, and (probably at the same time judging by ink shade) unnecessarily uses a caudata to convert *reced* to *ræced*. Unfortunately, alliteration on *h* is required as the b-verse is *hærepes dohtor*. Kiernan argues that where a scribe is certain enough to insert a superscript word, editors should follow and accept the resultant non-alliterating line.<sup>33</sup> He does not, incidentally, follow his own suggestion, and replaces *side* with *here* in his edition.<sup>34</sup> This is a puzzling instance: if the exemplar lacked a word in this position, why did Scribe B choose a word that does not alliterate?

Doane argues that *side* is an unnecessary and incorrect addition: because of this, and because it is a “rhythmic element”, he argues both that Scribe B was “attuned to the verse” and that – because he gets the verse wrong – it was not from the exemplar.<sup>35</sup> I do not understand his thinking here. If Scribe B were ‘attuned’ to the verse, he would have used any one of the possible adjectives beginning with *h*. If he were not ‘attuned’, he would not have noted the need for

32 Doane makes an interesting, though unconvincing, case that Scribe A was prepared to leave out a word at 159 (BL162)v, line 1331a as “the sense does not require it, flattening the text so that it satisfies the reading eye if not the ear”. ‘Scribal Performance’, p. 66; see also n. 15 p. 74.

33 Kiernan, *‘Beowulf’ Manuscript*, p. 185.

34 The usual editorial choice is *heah*, but the sense could be maintained with any number of adjectives for *reced*. Orchard notes that Kiernan’s “ultra-conservative” edition assumes some basic copying errors, *Companion*, p. 44 and notes.

35 Doane, ‘Scribal Performance’, p. 68.

a word at all unless it was in the exemplar: no adjective is needed to complete the sense. There is simply no reason for him to choose this word unless it was in the exemplar. It makes more sense to find that he was either incompetent as a reader of Old English verse, or his exemplar had *side*, or both. The first does not seem likely: he is capable of identifying a defective verse within Scribe A's stint when the exemplar did not contain it. If he was wilfully improvising wherever he saw an omission, why did he not make a similar insertion there? It seems most likely that his exemplar had *side*, or what looked like *side* to him. Given that the insertion mark and superscript word are in a different shade from the surrounding text, it is not likely that the insertion was made immediately on omission: it probably belongs to a later stage of correction. This interpretation brings us to a scribe who is prepared to make an inappropriate insertion where he has exemplar authority to do so. Such a reading works against both Kiernan's sense of this scribe as authorial, and Doane's sense of him as performative and partially improvising: I find instead a concerted effort to record what the exemplar showed. This can be compared with Scribe A's apparent willingness to insert a point where he knew text to be missing in the prose texts, with no sign of an effort to work out what the missing text could have been.

It is interesting that, as in 202 (BL205)v, the folio of *Judith* with three or four alterations, corrections seem to cluster during Scribe B's *Beowulf*. That is, while he averages 1.32 corrections per side in the text, with broadly consistent averages across each gathering, some pages have many more corrections. Three sides have three: 179 (BL182)v;<sup>36</sup> 187 (BL190)r; 193 (BL197)r. Three sides have more than three: 176 (BL179)v has four; 173 (BL176)v and 192 (BL196)v have five. Indeed, from 192 (BL196)v to 193 (BL197)v, there are ten corrections where this scribe's average would predict fewer than four. Immediately preceding those correction-strewn three sides are three sides with no corrections at all. Frequent and regular small-scale mistakes, as identified by editors in the text, suggest either a general level of difficulty in the task, or inattention and lack of skill in scribes. This degree of clustering of self-correction may imply phases of inattention, with frequent corrections either marking places where he was unusually vigilant or when, going back over his work, he realised that he had been unusually negligent. This could be connected with Scribe A's apparent

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36 This first cannot be certain: as discussed below, the folio is badly damaged and has probably been touched up. What is Scribe B's work and what is by another hand is a matter of conjecture. I see characteristic indications of Scribe B's corrective activity behind later damage and retouching. Orchard notes none of the emendations I see on this page, nor does he note the erasure of the first two lines, following Kiernan in seeing a palimpsest rather than a dittographic error being corrected followed by later phases of emendation.

phases of attentiveness, which I have suggested in Chapter 4 could have been a result of intermittent supervision. Given that editors do not find the text on these pages to be any more convincing than the rest of his work despite the intensity of scribal effort, it is possible that the intensity of effort was itself the object of the exercise: demonstrating to someone else that he was working hard towards an accurate copy. As we have seen with *Judith*, it is also possible that the scribe was simply having a bad day when working on these pages, making errors that he later corrected. That text he has worked hard at is not noticeably more accurate than other stretches of his work may imply that the exemplar was challenging, perhaps damaged – but this is going beyond the evidence.

Given the possible presence of a supervisor, it is worth noting that there is some slight but suggestive evidence that another hand was involved at points in correcting Scribe B's text, with three possible instances shown together in Figure 55. Certainly, the *p* added to correct *ongenpio* on 193 (BL197)v.19–20 is very unlike Scribe B's usual form.<sup>37</sup> It is also in an unusual position for his corrective practice, slightly above the line but not in superscript. It is usual for Scribe B to either make an immediate correction in the same ink, or to make a later correction in visibly different ink, at which point he uses a characteristic mark of insertion. This letter was obviously added later, judging by the ink shade, and has no mark of insertion. It is not likely to be his, though certainty is impossible. Superscript *ð* on 184 (BL187)r.19 is an unusually bilinear form for him to use. He does occasionally use this form,<sup>38</sup> and it may be a product of the lack of space available to him here. But his other use of the letter in superscript shows no concerns about space.<sup>39</sup> In general, indeed, Scribe B is characterised by his lack of concern around ascenders and descenders touching.<sup>40</sup> In his main text, the ascender of *ð* often touches the descenders of letters above.<sup>41</sup> Further, in corrections that are known to be his, he shows no concern about crossing the line above, as is evident on 193 (BL197)r.11 and 186 (BL189)r.3. So it is possible that this insertion, too, is not his, but that of a third hand. Third, the deletion and replacement of *eoprū cynne* on 192 (BL196)v.2 does not look very like Scribe B's hand. That the change was made at all seems likely to be a result of damaged text being restored – which in itself suggests a later action, though

37 Neidorf also sees this as unlikely to be Scribe B's hand, 'Scribal Errors for Proper Names', p. 269.

38 For example, he deploys it twice on 175 (BL178)v.2.

39 On 189a(197) (BL192)r.4.

40 Klegraf, 'Testing Faithful Copying', p. 215.

41 This happens, for instance, three times on 175 (BL178)r, at lines 2–3, 13–14, and 20–21.



FIGURE 55 Corrections to his work that may not be by Scribe B  
 on (top-bottom) 184 (BL187)r.19; 192 (BL196)v.2; 193 (BL197)v.20.  
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this does not rule out Scribe B's involvement. But the bowls of both *p* and *r* are unusually rounded and *y* is altogether unlike his: undotted (which occurs but is rare in his work), and a rounded form with a straight tail. Scribe B uses straight, rounded, and occasionally *f*-shaped forms of *y*, but his rounded form usually has a very short and rounded descender, as on this side at line 12 and shown in Figure 3.<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, the *eo* ligature and terminal *e* are very like his forms, and it may simply be the case that his hand changed a little in the time between first writing the text here and needing to make this alteration. Either instance speaks of the use of this manuscript some point after it was produced, and engagement with the text of *Beowulf* at least – analogous to a number of marks of later engagement reviewed in Appendix 4. All of these changes may be Scribe B's, but I think it likely that they are the work of a third hand who may, of course, also be responsible for some of the other alterations, such as

42 In his notes to *Electronic Beowulf* 3.0, Kiernan calls it the “same or very similar hand”, which implies the possibility that this is not Scribe B's work.

the erroneous caudatas. Certainly, there is a retouching hand visible in some of Scribe B's work who seeks (and generally fails) to imitate his letter-forms.

Scribe B's corrective activity in both his own and his colleague's work is useful evidence of a close focus on the text, analogous to a modern editor's.<sup>43</sup> The possibility – which remains slight – of a third curator of the text, working some time after Scribe B or possibly looking over his shoulder, would be suggestive of the significance that the community attributed to this codex. The multiple problems that remain in *Beowulf* cannot reasonably be assigned to Scribe B's carelessness, nor to a disregard for the exemplar or an inability to read it accurately. Instead, they are consistent with the scenario explored in Chapters 2, 3, and 4 of a difficult text or a difficult exemplar, or both, and a demanding scribal project at the limits of its collective executors' capacity.

### Scribe B's Density of Copying

Another challenge which *Beowulf* presented to Scribe B's capability lay in the amount of text he had to copy compared with the amount of space he had to copy it into. Orchard points out the marked increase in the intensity of copying in the final gathering of *Beowulf*: he finds that Scribe B writes an average of 23.58 lines per side across the whole of his contribution, and 26.69 in gathering 13.<sup>44</sup> This is a clear effort to complete the text within that gathering. This, incidentally, suggests both that the gathering had been made in advance of any thinking about the length of the text and that this scribe was reluctant to add singletons, supporting the suggestion in Chapter 2 that a singleton was not used to complete *Judith*. A closer look at the density of Scribe B's copying is still more suggestive.

By my count, Scribe B produces an average of 46.77 full half-lines per side throughout *Beowulf*, and a much lower 42.56 per side in the single gathering of *Judith*.<sup>45</sup> The lower rate in *Judith* is close to some parts of his work on *Beowulf*: his gathering 11 average is 41.23; in gathering 12 this average increases to 44.55; in gathering 13 he averages 52.60. This might simply suggest that he became more concerned about space, and more adept at cramming verse in, as the

43 For scribes as editors, see further Thomson, "Whistle While You Work", pp. 107–111 and refs.

44 As noted in Terms Used, Orchard measures poetic lines rather than half-lines (or verses); I use half-lines as a slightly more flexible tool. *Companion*, pp. 20–21.

45 As noted in Chapter 4, I count only full half-lines per side and not words that belong to half-lines which cross from one side to another.

copying of *Beowulf* proceeded. In *Judith*, the considerable variation in half-line length and bursts of hypermetric lines make this measure a less reliable indicator of the density of copying, but the same pattern is broadly identifiable there, with three of the last five sides having more than fifty half-lines apiece. Such variation within a single gathering of *Judith* speaks against Boyle's case that these increases reflect a precisely calculated change at the start of each gathering. Within each gathering of *Beowulf*, the degree of internal inconsistency is apparent by calculating each gathering's mean and the degree of deviation from it. In gathering 11, Scribe B deviates by 4.79 from that gathering's mean; in 12, he deviates by 5.85; in gathering 13, he deviates by a remarkable 16.14. Sides contain from 38 to 45 full half-lines in gathering 11, from 39 to 50 in gathering 12, and from 47 to 65 in gathering 13. So the extent to which Scribe B works 'regularly' deteriorates as the gatherings (and probably time) go on. There is no particular pattern to the density of copying: the sides earlier in a gathering are not consistently less crowded, and later ones more so. Even in the final gathering, where, with three sides to go, Scribe B resorts to writing three very dense sides (57, 59, and 65 half-lines per side respectively), there are denser followed by lighter pages earlier in and throughout the gathering. The only sequence of sides with a remotely regular number of half-lines per side occurs in gathering 12: from 183 (BL186)v–186 (BL189)v, seven sides have 46 half-lines with the exception of 184 (BL187)v, which has 43. It is worth noting both that this regular figure of 46 half-lines matches Scribe A's most regular sequence (discussed in Chapter 4), which also has 46 half-lines per side for a number of consecutive leaves.

Gathering 12 also has a much higher proportion of the coincidence of half-line end with side end which, I suggested in Chapter 4, may have been a desideratum for scribal work on poetic texts in this period. Scribe B's overall rate for this is 54.72% in *Beowulf* and 56.25% in *Judith*, where A's in *Beowulf* is just 33.33%. In the context of the discussion in Chapter 4, it is worth briefly noting that there is no pattern of correlation between the half-lines which Scribe B

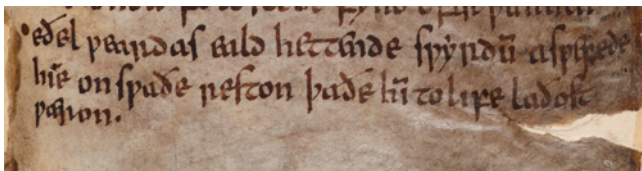


FIGURE 56 *Judith*, lines 320–322 on 206 (BL209)r.19–21.

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ends at the end of sides and the conclusion of units of meaning or narrative. None of the nine instances in *Judith* coincides with a break in meaning or a new sentence as marked by any editor of the text. His deliberation in the ending of a side at the end of a half-line is particularly apparent on 203 (BL206)r and 206 (BL209)r, Figure 56. In the first instance, space is left at the end of poetic line 176a into which *to*, the first word of the b-verse, would fit comfortably. In the second, the scribe puts *pæron* (poetic line 322) on a twenty-first manuscript line in order to complete the half-line. As shown in Figure 46, when scribes do this in Junius 11, they place the extra word on the right hand side of the additional line, clearly showing that it is an addition and sometimes using a bracketing mark to indicate its connection with the last word of the last 'full' manuscript line. Scribe B does not do this here, however, starting a new manuscript line with normal spacing. Given that he has done this, it is revealing that he does not even complete the sentence with the first two words of 323a. Space becomes very tight for him on the next, and final extant, page of the text, so it is surprising that he does not take the opportunity to fit in as many words as possible when he has gone to the trouble of creating this additional unruled line of text. It is, thus, clear that completing poetic line 322b metrically was more important to him than either completing the idea or fitting as much text as possible onto the side.

The closeness of Scribe B's averages of coincidence of side and half-line ending between *Beowulf* and *Judith* superficially looks indicative of the conscious, if partial, performance of this metrical criterion. However, B's average in *Beowulf* is, like his density of copying, characterised by inconsistency. In gathering 11, the coincidence of half-line and side ending is 38.46%. Gathering 13 has exactly half of its pages ending with the conclusion of a half-line. And in gathering 12, 70% of the folios – that is, 14 out of 20 – end at the conclusion of a half-line. If this measure can be seen as an indication of scribal interest in or awareness of metrical form, or as a criterion for controlled copying, the differences both between the scribes and between the gatherings are of interest. First, the impression that Scribe B was senior and more experienced is sustained. The difference between the scribes is not as great in this respect as it is between the main and 'incompetent' hands of Junius 11 (as noted in Chapter 4) but it does parallel that pairing. Second, the variation in coincidence of half-line and side ending taken with the variation in density of copying between the gatherings makes the separate gatherings look increasingly like separate pieces of work.

By gathering 13, Scribe B was working very hard to complete the text of *Beowulf* in the number of pages already prepared. It is impressive – Orchard

calls it “astonishing” – that he manages to do so.<sup>46</sup> But it is also a reminder that the challenges which Scribe A faced in making *Beowulf* fit his folios do not place him as inexperienced and incapable by comparison with his colleague. If Scribe B had copied gathering 13 at the same average rate of poetic half-lines per page as he had in gathering 12 – already denser than his work in gathering 11 – he would have completed only 891 poetic lines, leaving himself with around 165 lines, or approximately 3.5 folios of text at his rate of copying in gathering 12, which is coincidentally the same amount of space Scribe A intrudes into of gathering 11 when finishing his portion of *Beowulf*. That Scribe B was able to make the lines up without needing to add pages or expand his writing frame is indeed tribute to his skill – even if the last three folios copied become cramped, with the final side messy even discounting the damage it has sustained. The very last word of the poem had to be written on an additional manuscript line. Scribe B adopts the same tactic in *Judith*, which also has its final page crammed with verse, awash with abbreviations, and with extreme and consistent violation of the right hand margin to the writing frame. Despite this effort, this text had to be completed on a final additional side, now lost. Scribe B's superiority over A in terms of planning and foresight seems to have been somewhat exaggerated: the only real difference is that we can see him preparing for and working towards the end of his stint, whereas there is little indication of Scribe A doing so towards the end of his work.<sup>47</sup> However, that this compression is the tactic B selects on two occasions to deal with too much text for too little space stands in contrast to Boyle's argument for his more controlled behaviour in gathering 11.

In gathering 11, according to Boyle's widely followed argument, Scribe B is working to make up for Scribe A's lack of control. He made the careful calculation that he could include all of the required text within twelve and a half sides by including an additional manuscript line on four of them (174 (BL177)v–176 (BL179)r). As the pages had already been ruled for 20 lines (Scribe A's usual arrangement), he had to either write on an additional line or ignore the line rulings and copy 21 lines of text more or less freehand in the ruled frame. He took the latter course. As noted in Chapter 4, when Scribe A ruled for 22 lines in gathering 10, he seems to have done so because he lacked space but then struggled to follow the rulings cleanly; Scribe B encounters no such difficulty.

46 *Companion*, p. 20. The editors of *Klaeber's 'Beowulf'* are less impressed, noting: “the proportion [of text to the page] increases toward the end, where the second scribe economized on space”, p. xxix.

47 Though he likely simply finished work on his allotted gatherings, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 4 above.



Further, by adding extra lines to two versos and the facing rectos, he ensures that the open book looks even and consistent. It is the care taken in this operation which impresses Boyle and Kiernan with a sense of the man's capacity. This same argument has been used to argue that Scribe B must have written gatherings 12 and 13 and then come back to gathering 11, because he knew precisely how much text he needed to copy and had to fit it into a certain space. This has, in turn, been used to problematise the scribal handover: if Scribe B had to come back to gathering 11 after finishing the rest of his work, this suggests that there was a problem that he was solving rather than simply copying his allotted gatherings after Scribe A had finished.

What neither Orchard, Kiernan, nor Boyle, has commented on is that in gathering 11 – where the scribe is supposedly taking over from Scribe A because extreme measures had to be taken to fit everything in – he produces only 41.23 full half-lines per page. 174 (BL177)v is the densest of the gathering's sides: a mere 45 full half-lines, below the overall average for his work and far below the amount he was capable of fitting in when he was demonstrably attempting to compress his hand.<sup>48</sup> By half-line count per side, gathering 11 is the least productive single sequence of scribal copying in the whole of *Beowulf*, in a passage with only a few lengthy poetic lines and no stints of hypermetrical verse.<sup>49</sup> In Boyle's narrative, Scribe B copied 198 (BL201)v, cramming in 65 half-lines across 22 manuscript lines, then turned immediately to gathering 11 to solve a crisis of space, where he was only capable of fitting in 42 or so half-lines in by turning 20 ruled lines into 21. This is simply not tenable. There is little reason to maintain the position that the takeover occurred due to a concern about Scribe A's ability to solve the problem of too much text for too few pages. This could only have been the case if the scribes were committed to reproducing each manuscript line as it stood (as Boyle also argues; an idea, which, as we have seen in Chapter 2, is equally untenable). The reason for the extra line elegantly fitted into each side from 174 (BL177)v to 176 (BL179r) is not a need to cram poetry in where parchment did not suffice. I must admit that I do not have a compelling explanation to put in its place; two suggestions are made below, though it may simply need to be classed as one of the "apparently unmotivated variants" which scribes sometimes introduce.<sup>50</sup>

First, it is possible that it started as an accident. The line rulings at the start of 174 (BL177)v are not clear under normal light; if they were equally hard to

48 Fulk *et al.*, *Klaeber's 'Beowulf'* gives an average of "slightly fewer than 23 poetic lines" (i.e. 46 half-lines) to the page, p. xxix.

49 Scribe B's work in gathering 11 covers poetic lines 1939b–2207a.

50 Wilcox, *ASMMF* 17, p. 3, of two irregular instances of line ruling in CUL Gg. 3. 28.

make out in the eleventh century, the scribe might have struggled to see them and written off the ruled line. Gatherings ruled exclusively for Scribe B all have 21 lines per side; this may have been a pattern and system to which he was very accustomed. As noted in Chapter 4, when Scribe A makes this sort of error in gathering 10, each time he just goes back to writing on the ruled line again leaving the page looking strangely spaced. Scribe B's experience and skill might be evidenced by his ability to retain a consistent visual appearance when he makes an error.

A second possibility requires more explanation. Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe notes that the most significant burst of punctuation in the poem occurs across the last eight folios of gathering 11: from 175 (BL178)r–178 (BL181)v, poetic lines 2044–2210a.<sup>51</sup> Table 12 shows the correspondence of this sequence with the expanded sides.<sup>52</sup> Following Boyle, she points out that it seems extraordinary for a scribe apparently so concerned about space to have suddenly acquired a concern for punctuation which he shows nowhere else; her case is the stronger for showing that a point demands space either side of it and thus takes up as much room as a short word.<sup>53</sup> O'Brien O'Keeffe has to work quite hard to account for this and ultimately suggests that the presence of punctuation in a passage of scribal compression indicates how important the scribe must have felt it to be in this particular passage. In turn, she suggests that it cannot have suddenly become important here to a scribe who does not use it consistently elsewhere, and that it must therefore have come from the exemplar. As we can discard the proposition that Scribe B is concerned about space in these pages, it is no longer necessary to assume that the pointing was in his exemplar (although it may have been) and regarded as something crucial to reproduce. It may, instead, have been introduced here for the first time and be connected to his additional line per side rather than standing in contrast to it. It may even be interpretive, indicating that Scribe B could and did use punctuation where he had space or particular call to do so. It should be stressed that this is by no means an inevitable conclusion from this re-reading, but that the possibility, closed down by O'Brien O'Keeffe, can now be reopened.

51 *Visible Song*, pp. 175–176.

52 'Heavily punctuated' sides here are those following O'Brien O'Keeffe. She is disagreeing with (or refining) Dobbie's statement ('*Beowulf*' and '*Judith*', p. xxx) that the stretch is poetic lines 1963–2500. The editors of *Klaeber's Beowulf* implicitly follow Dobbie (and go further than him) in suggesting that it is the "first 600 verse lines of B's work", which are lines 1939–2539, pp. xxxii.

53 *Visible Song*, p. 177.

TABLE 12 *Coincidence of heavily punctuated and extended manuscript pages.*

Sheet	Poetic lines	Written lines	Heavily punctuated?
174 (BL177)v	2022a–2044	21	No
175 (BL178)r	2044–2065a	21	Yes
175 (BL178)v	2065a–2087	21	Yes
176 (BL179)r	2088–2108	21	Yes
176 (BL179)v	2108–2130a	20	Yes
177 (BL180)r	2130–2149	20	Yes
177 (BL180)v	2149–2169	20	Yes
178 (BL181)r	2169–2188	20	Yes
178 (BL181)v	2189–2210a	20	Yes

The passage is part of Beowulf's prediction to Hygelac of conflict over Freawaru, Ingeld's increasing rivalry, and strife in Heorot. He goes on to recount the fight with Grendel; the rewards given by Hrothgar and his stories contrasting youth and age; Grendel's Mother's attack, her defeat, and subsequent rewards. The poet's coda to the speech tells us about the Geats' lack of respect for young Beowulf, in contrast with the renown and land which Hygelac now gives him. Doane has suggested that, relative to Scribe A, Scribe B was familiar with the heroic names and history in the poem.<sup>54</sup> Possibly, in this Ingeld passage packed with names and allusion, Scribe B's excessive use of punctuation stands alongside, rather than in contrast to, the addition of extra lines at the end of each page.<sup>55</sup> The increase in manuscript lines, allowing his hand to spread, is thus no longer a perverse choice given that he could easily have fitted the text in on 20 lines. It is possible, of course, in keeping with the evidence from corrections and errors, that Scribe B was simply being absolutely faithful to his exemplar. But all of these choices can also be read as his attempt to clarify a challenging, or particularly interesting, sequence of text. Just as Scribe A seems

54 'Scribal Performance', p. 66. Contrast Neidorf, who finds that both scribes "were largely unaware of the heroic-legendary traditions constituting *Beowulf*." 'Scribal Errors for Proper Names', p. 251.

55 Compare Klegraf, who suggests that B's writing may be "influenced by standards of transparency or even aesthetic motives", 'Faithful Copying', p. 215.

to have been working on an innovative presentation of *Wonders*, and to have perhaps used small capitals to highlight some passages of particular interest in *St Christopher* and *Alexander*, it is possible that Scribe B sought to innovate in his presentation of *Beowulf*: both scribes, perhaps, using visual devices and layout in the Nowell Codex to bring old texts to new audiences.<sup>56</sup>

### 179 (BL182): The Palimpsest

Folio 179 (BL182), which opens gathering 12 and contains poetic lines 2207–52a, is in extremely poor condition and the text requires considerable reconstruction, especially on the recto. Both recto and verso appear to have had substantial erasures, with subsequent efforts to restore text including the possible application of a reagent, the re-inking of at least some letters, and perhaps additional water damage. Zupitza's judgement that "[a]ll that is distinct in the FS. [facsimile] in fol. 179 has been freshened up by a later hand in the MS" has been generally followed, although Tilman Westphalen identified it as a palimpsest and felt that Zupitza's 'freshening' hand was in fact that of Scribe B.<sup>57</sup> In 1981, Kiernan brought new attention to this folio and held it up at the centre of his thesis that the poem was partly authored in this copy: that Scribe B did indeed erase and rewrite the folio because a new bridging section was needed to unite two older texts. Since this controversial claim, all scholars of *Beowulf* must come to a conclusion about 179 (BL182).<sup>58</sup> However, as Kiernan notes, any certainty is very difficult. One part is simple. Most of the text on the first two manuscript lines on the verso has been erased, and Kiernan identifies a dittograph beneath it: the last two lines from the recto were originally

56 Doane argues for scribal work as innovative in general, 'Scribal Performance', pp. 62–64; and for the *Beowulf* scribes in particular, 'Scribal Performance', p. 65 onwards. His focus is, however, on control of text and words, not visual appearance. Compare Julia Crick's argument that "in pre-Conquest England graphic choices at the very least signal a position within the wider literate world." 'Sense of the Past', p. 6; and my general discussion of scribal creativity in "Whistle While You Work", pp. 111–121.

57 See the discussion in *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, pp. 219–243. As discussed by Kiernan, Tilman Westphalen identified the palimpsest in *Beowulf* 3150–55: *Textkritik und Editionsgeschichte* (München, 1967). See also Malone, *Nowell Codex*, p. 83, who notes some objections to Zupitza's proposal and does not express an opinion on the matter.

58 While disagreeing with Kiernan, Carl Berkhout also observes the importance of responding to his findings, '*Beowulf* 2200–08: Mind the Gap', *American Notes and Queries* 15 (2002), 51–58 at p. 52.

also copied on the verso.<sup>59</sup> This is straightforward scribal activity, in line with substantial dittographs and erasures in Scribe A's work on the prose texts; at some point after it had been written, the two lines were poorly erased.

However, another stage, which may have occurred at the same time as this erasure, saw text being written on top of erasures. The work of this hand is patchy at best. Recto lines 10–13, for instance, read

sýððan þ ð slæpende  
sýre þeoses cræfte þ si  
ð folc beorn þ hæge  
bolge pæs.

Kiernan prints:

He þæt sýððan beget  
þeah ðe he slæpende besyred hæfde  
þeofes cræfte, þæt sie ðiod onfand,  
bufolc beornes, þæt he gebolgen wæs.

Much of the reconstruction is based on letter-forms visible under different lights and evidence from the Thorkelin transcripts: the text is not invented. But it is as though the restorer inked in the letters he could see relatively clearly but not the others. He was not redrafting. In places, the apparent attempt to retrace Scribe B's letter-forms is poor: as shown in Figure 57, the end of line 12, for instance, is very awkward. As shown in Figure 58, many of the letters on the verso are even weaker: *þ* in *þæs*, for instance, is misshapen, as is the whole

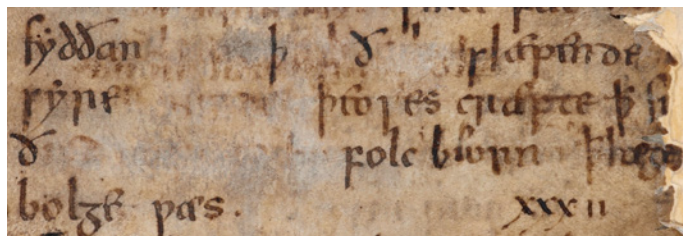


FIGURE 57 179 (BL182)r.10–13. See also colour plate 12.

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59 The extent of Scribe B's mistakes and corrections on this folio is very difficult to ascertain. I identify at least two corrections underlying the palimpsest phase, but this number could easily be revised up or perhaps down; see Appendix 3.

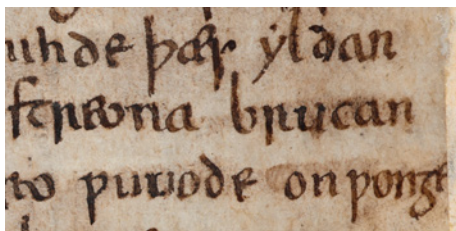


FIGURE 58

179 (BL182)v.10–12.

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of *punode* two lines below in which the terminal *e* particularly has the form of an attempt to trace an unfamiliar shape.<sup>60</sup> Kiernan concludes that Scribe B continued to work on the poem for up to twenty years, ultimately producing a revised sequence to connect the two sections of the text. This theory does not stand up to examination. The folio is in remarkably poor condition. Kiernan explains this by suggesting that the parchment must have been damp when rewritten, and the ink did not adhere. This is entirely reasonable; not so, the notion that a poet-scribe would have spent two decades working on an autograph manuscript, only to produce a catastrophic mess at the end.

Further, it is already difficult for some palaeographers to accept that anyone can have been writing in Scribe B's Square script well into the second decade of the eleventh century. Kiernan (to my mind entirely reasonably) would have Scribe B writing most of his text after 1017. But he would also have him writing a slightly amended and clumsier hand, struggling in places to read his own letters, up to twenty years later, closer to 1037. This seems highly unlikely on palaeographic grounds. It also seems dubious as a personal narrative. If Scribe B were a senior scribe, writing an outdated script in the early eleventh century, he probably learned his art before 990.<sup>61</sup> We can estimate that he would have been at least 15 (and perhaps rather older) by the time he had a settled hand. On the basis of this reasoning, if he wrote his part of *Beowulf* at Kiernan's earliest date of 1017, he was at least 42 at the time of writing, still refusing to adapt to the new English Vernacular minuscule style.<sup>62</sup> Kiernan, nonetheless, would have him controlling this manuscript into his sixties, developing new letter

60 Compare London, BL, Cotton Vitellius C. v, discussed in Chapter 6 and shown in Figure 69.

61 Dumville's latest charter using Square minuscular for Latin text is from 987, '*Beowulf* Come Lately', pp. 53–54.

62 Compare Conner's comments on the communal and spiritual significance of scribes bringing their hands into alignment with one another, 'Matched Scribal Hands' throughout, esp. pp. 42 & 49.

shapes and adapting to a new orthography, up to the point when a manuscript page became a mess.

It is much simpler to see the restored text as written – as Zupitza suggested – by a “later hand”.<sup>63</sup> That later hand tried to follow Scribe B's letter-forms and his text, and must have been broadly successful in doing so. That the restorer could not retrace 21 full manuscript lines is more likely to be due to not being able to read it all than because he made an aesthetic decision to abbreviate it. Kiernan observes that there is no need to add poetic lines to what is in the manuscript, and uses this as evidence that it is a revision by Scribe B. But the same fact could also point to the more likely conclusion that a later reader was (like modern editors) trying to perform a sympathetic patch-job: to restore what he could without rendering the text unreadable. This is, incidentally, a useful piece of evidence both suggesting that the manuscript and this text remained of interest for some time after the decline of Square minuscule, and making it likely that the restorer did not have access to another copy to support his work. Kiernan also argues that the partial erasure of three lines on 180 (BL183)v is part of this revision: that Scribe B wiped out 45 (rather than 42) manuscript lines in the process of editing. His main reasoning is that nowhere else does Scribe B make a large error, dittographic or otherwise: this cannot, therefore, have been a copying error. He argues that the lines were erased deliberately. Therefore, Scribe B would have erased them (or had them erased) for aesthetic reasons. But Scribe A copies more than twice as much as Scribe B in the extant codex, and has only two sites of major erasure, neither of which is in *Beowulf*. That does not mean that the erasures he makes are evidence of aesthetic revision: it means that he made some mistakes. The same is true of Scribe B. Reading more into the coincidence of erasure and an unusually damaged folio is risky at best; it certainly cannot support a speculative conclusion.

Berkhout gives another reading of the erasure. He suggests that Scribe B may have “accidentally omitted a full clause”, had the text of both recto and verso of 179 (BL182) erased, and planned to restore the omitted text by writing in a more compressed way (as he does at the end of gathering 12).<sup>64</sup> But, Berkhout suggests, the erasure of the verso was aborted because it rubbed the parchment too thin and the plan could not be carried out. The difficulties with this reading are that it necessitates seeing these hardworking correctors as

63 Zupitza, *Beowulf*, p. 144. See also Gerritsen, ‘Supplementary’, pp. 30–31, and Fulk *et al.*, *Klaeber's Beowulf*, pp. xxviii–ix, who implicitly follow Zupitza; cf. Berkhout, ‘Mind the Gap’.

64 ‘Mind the Gap’, p. 54; he reconstructs the process pp. 55–56. He makes some suggestions about what the missing text may have contained, p. 55.

abandoning the job at this point, “leaving *Beowulf* [...] far more depleted than it had been before”.<sup>65</sup> It also assumes that Scribe B needed to have two full sides of text erased in order to fit in a few omitted half-lines. This is hardly credible: elsewhere, Scribe B fits 65 half-lines onto one side of 198 (BL201), and there are only 43 on the whole of 179 (BL182)r as it now stands. Any missing text could more easily have been brought into the end of gathering 11: of the last four sides, three have fewer than 40 half-lines. If additional text needed inserting once the whole project had been finished, why would he have chosen to erase 179 (BL182) rather than the less crowded 178 (BL181)?

There is another way of reading this evidence. Errors tend to attract errors in the Nowell Codex. That might be evidence of the scribes having bad days, when they were working in poor light or with distractions.<sup>66</sup> Or they might be evidence of an exemplar that, like the Nowell Codex itself, had sequences of folios which had sustained more and less damage. There may be less text than usual on 179 (BL182) because there was another erasure there. Even without clear evidence about what Scribe B originally wrote on these pages, it is in the highest degree unlikely that his is the hand that produced such a poor job on the palimpsest. The most reasonable reaction to the erased lines is to read them as all related to the dittography identified on the verso. Scribe B is prone to minor dittographic errors: there are at least nine which he self-corrects in his work on *Beowulf*. This would be a more major mistake, but we can be certain that at least part of this folio sees him make a larger dittographic error than he does anywhere else.

This does not, of course, answer the question of why the folios are in such poor condition. It should be noted that Kiernan provides no answer: his suggestion is simply that a revision was desired by Scribe B some time after the original act of copying, perhaps towards the end of Cnut's reign.<sup>67</sup> As Kiernan observes, Zupitza's proposal of a later scribe searching for parchment, erasing a page, and then being stopped, is flawed.<sup>68</sup> Why would such a search begin two-thirds of the way through a poem which is itself two-thirds of the way through a codex? My reading (which does not answer all of Kiernan's points) would see Scribe B's dittograph and erasure as being merely coincidental with

65 'Mind the Gap', p. 56.

66 Scribal complaints are well attested. See Gameson, 'The Scribe Speaks?'; Thomson "'Whistle while you work'", pp. 105–106.

67 Cf. Damico's argument that the writing of the first two-thirds of *Beowulf* could be related to the political situation at the close of Cnut's reign, *'Beowulf' and the Grendelkin*.

68 Zupitza's suggestion is at *'Beowulf'*, p. 102. Kiernan's initial refutation is at *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, p. 219; see also 'nathwylc Scribe', p. 98.



the poor condition of the folio. That this is the first page of gathering 12 makes it entirely feasible that it was separated and exposed at some point: 189A(197) (BL192) has such a complex name because it was misplaced in the modern era; the same is true of 147A(131) (BL149). These occur at the start of gathering 13 and the end of gathering 7 respectively.<sup>69</sup> 179 (BL182), at the start of gathering 11, was not misplaced, but it was exposed to something: perhaps just water, or perhaps a more corrosive substance. This may, indeed, be the most dramatic instance of errors attracting errors in the codex: Scribe B's original dittography resulting in an erased space, coinciding with the folio being exposed to damage; a later reader assuming that a significant portion of text had been lost and attempting to redraw what he could see; yet another later reader seeing still lost (and damaged) text, and applying a reagent in an attempt to expose what was there.

There are also, it should be noted, a number of other folios in the same gathering in similarly – though by no means equally – poor condition; as Gerritsen notes, such damage is not particularly unusual in this manuscript or in the Cotton manuscripts as a whole.<sup>70</sup> Infrequently throughout the codex, a page looks as though it has been scraped or scrubbed, sometimes giving letters a shadow, and sometimes giving scrape marks across the page.<sup>71</sup> The first three lines of 180 (BL183)v look as though an abortive attempt has been made to erase them.<sup>72</sup> Folios often show signs of water damage, much of which is probably attributable to the 1731 Ashburnham House fire and its consequences.

Signs of overwriting or touching up of letters are also fairly widespread. Two examples are on 184 (BL187)v. On line 14, *i* in *pihte* is faded: the *h* beside it has a clear ascender and more faded lower strokes. This likely shows the effect of water on the ink. Two lines below it, *hatian* seems to have had the final three letters re-inked. Possibly the damage to them was greater than that to *pihte*, but they were still legible enough for retouching. Retouching is also in evidence throughout 192 (BL196)v.1–6, as shown in Figure 59. Here, it may be the case that the erasure on line 2 has somehow caused damage more widely around the page. This 'correction' is unusual: elsewhere, Scribe B either erases

69 Kiernan suggests that these pages were used to enclose *Judith* between the creation of the codex in 1563 and the fire in 1731, with their restoration to their proper places attributable to Thorkelin, 'Reformed Codex'.

70 Gerritsen, 'Supplementary', pp. 294–295; Kiernan *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, p. 245.

71 See for instance 180 (BL183)r, 181 (BL184)r, and 185 (BL188)r.

72 Like Kiernan, Berkhout connects this with the erasure on 179 (BL182), suggesting that the eraser – whom he calls E – may have accidentally turned too many pages and started erasing 180 (BL183)v instead of 179 (BL182)v.

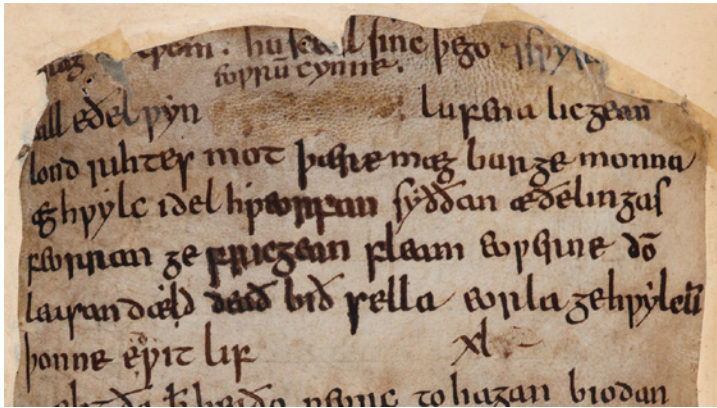


FIGURE 59 Erasure, retouching, and possible water damage on 192 (BL196)v.1–6.

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and writes in the new space, or erases and leaves a gap, or does not erase and writes a superscript correction. Here, it looks as though *eopru cynne* has been written, erased, and then written again above the line. As discussed above, the writing may not be Scribe B's, and was certainly not written at the same time as the rest of this side. The best explanation is Kiernan's, who suggests that the damage to the rest of the side may have been worst at this point, which was therefore rewritten (by Scribe B or a third party) to improve legibility. Regardless of that error, the condition of the page below it, along with the numerous signs of different types of damage, suggests that the codex was badly stored, or badly treated, at some point, but also that the texts it contained were important enough to attempt a repair. Given that the overwriting is sometimes identifiably in a later hand, and often clumsy, it is certain that the damage and repairs took place after the scribes had finished with the codex. Gerritsen's suggestion that the touching up may have been as late as Nowell is attractive (because it gives a name to the hand holding the pen), but unnecessary.<sup>73</sup> There is no evidence that Nowell or anyone else after the Anglo-Saxon period read *Beowulf*.<sup>74</sup> These folios provide evidence that *Beowulf* held significance for at least one reader; as it is more or less impossible to know when the repairs were attempted, the evidence is of little further use, though it is reasonable to suggest that the changes are more likely to have been effected in the

73 Gerritsen 'Supplementary', pp. 30–31. Berkhout also sees Nowell's hand, calling the touching up "moderately impressive though ultimately clumsy", 'Mind the Gap', p. 52.

74 See Chapter 4 and Appendix 4; cf. Kiernan 'Beowulf' Manuscript, pp. 91–99.

Anglo-Saxon period or shortly thereafter when Old English was still read. The poverty of the attempts to trace Scribe B's hand suggest a scribe not trained to write in Square minuscule and that there was no exemplar to work from make it certain that it was done some time after the original production. The palimpsest and the surrounding pages, then, give relatively little evidence of readership or purpose in the creation of the Nowell Codex, though they suggest some interest in the text from someone without access to the exemplar the scribes used to produce this copy: despite Neidorf's argument of a decline in interest in the heroic past, someone was still interested enough in this representation of it to attempt a readable reconstruction of a damaged text.

### Usage and Form of Major Capitals

The fitt numbers of *Beowulf* have been much discussed in both the context of the poem and of Anglo-Saxon practice more generally: as Fulk notes, it is "the only fitted poem in Old English that was not copied by a single scribe."<sup>75</sup> Fulk argues that Scribe B is less aware of or interested in them – or at least clumsier in applying them – than Scribe A. He points out that the divisions made to open fitts XXXI, XXXII, XXXIII, XXXIV, and XLII do not make sense to modern editors, and argues that they therefore cannot have been defined by the poet.<sup>76</sup> It is also notable that Scribe A misses out number XXIIII, and that his subsequent numbers are incorrect. This is reasonably read by most scholars as clear evidence that, whether or not the divisions existed in an exemplar, the numbers were very probably first introduced in this copy, though it is possible that the error was made in the exemplar and simply replicated here.<sup>77</sup> The idea that numbers are being introduced into the text is consistent with my view that some innovations were being made in this codex's re-presentation of its texts; it also makes it more improbable that the story did not matter to the people who copied it, or that it was incomprehensible to them.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, that the problematic divisions are all in Scribe B's section, whereas the fitt breaks in Scribe A's stint always 'work' for Fulk, indicates that the divisions

75 'Numbered Sections', p. 91.

76 'Numbered Sections', pp. 96–97.

77 See Klaeber's *Beowulf* for a clear discussion of this issue and the fitt numbering in general, pp. xxxiii–xxxv. NB. that in the ensuing discussion, I use Scribe A's numbers for the fitts, not modern editorial figures.

78 This stands against Neidorf's position in 'Scribal Errors of Proper Names' and 'Germanic Legend'.

may have been produced by the Nowell Codex scribes, with A “better attuned to the structure of the narrative” than B.<sup>79</sup> That these scribes produced (or at least numbered) the sections indicates to Fulk that the exemplar may have been archaic and in need of updating for a new audience with expectations of fitt divisions.<sup>80</sup> Scribe B is then left struggling to adapt to the demands of producing a text in this new manner: implicitly, fitt divisions must therefore have been demanded (but not set by) another party. It also implies that Scribe B may not have understood or been interested in the content or structure of his text.

As discussed above in regard to metre, there is some (limited) evidence that Scribe B was aware of the texts he copied, making it difficult to follow Fulk in

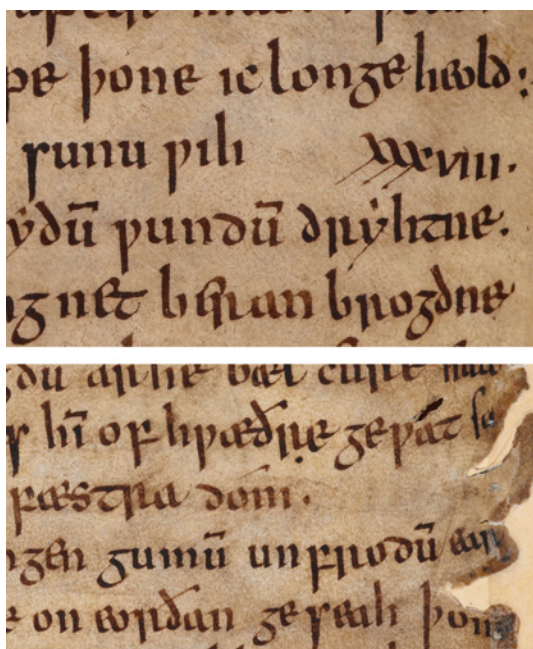


FIGURE 60 *Fitt numbers in Beowulf squeezed into and left out of similar sized spaces on 189 (BL193)v and 191 (BL195)r.*

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79 'Numbered Sections', p. 105.

80 He is consciously supplementing Lapidge's argument; he also notes some counter-evidence that dividing texts into fitts may have been a very old practice. 'Numbered Sections', p. 109. On editing of *Beowulf* and its fitt numbers, see also Donald G. Scragg, 'Towards a New Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records', *New Approaches to Editing Old English Verse*, eds. Sarah Larratt Keefer and Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe (Cambridge, 1998), 67–78, at pp. 72–73.

finding him entirely uninterested in the structure of *Beowulf*. But Scribe B's diminished interest in the fitt numbers is broadly supported by the diminished prominence he gives them. It is true that (unlike Scribe A) Scribe B generally concludes the text of a fitt with some form of elaborated punctuation, most usually a punctus elevatus.<sup>81</sup> However, contrary to Scribe A's regular practice, the numbers never occupy a line to themselves and are sometimes squeezed in as at 189 (BL193)v for xxxviii, the top image in Figure 60. Those for fitt xxx, on 174 (BL170)v, and for fitt xxxix on 191 (BL195)r (the second image in Figure 60) are not written in at all, although major capitals show that the scribe was aware of a new section and the numbering continues correctly on 177 (BL180)r with xxxi and 192 (BL196)v with xl.

The factor determining Scribe B's presentation of fitt numbers is purely practical: how much space happened to be left when the last manuscript line before the sectional break was written. Where there is plenty of space, the number is confident and clear, and is sometimes followed by a point, as for instance on 181 (BL184)r. Where space is more restricted, numbers are either squeezed in or left out. On 174 (BL177)v.18 there is no space at all, and the scribe had to choose between writing the number in the margin or on a new line: he chose to leave it out. On 189 (BL193)v, the last line of fitt xxxvii fills the manuscript line, and the scribe chooses to make space for the number at the end of the first line of the new fitt (manuscript line 17). This is, incidentally, an indication that the fitt numbers were written in as he went along. Interestingly, he does not seem to have been satisfied with the appearance here. The spaces he makes on the latter page and that naturally available at 191 (BL195)r.12 are very similar in size. He has deliberately created the first space for the number, but xxxviii is squeezed and a little clumsy; in the second, xxxix is left out where it could have been forced in without making more room. It may, then, be the case that Scribe B was making decisions as he went along: reviewing the aspect of the first number and finding it unacceptable, he preferred to leave it out at



FIGURE 61  
Fitt numbers *x* (199 (BL202)r), *xi* (202 (B205)r), and  
*xii* (204 (BL207)v) in Judith.

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81 Fulke et al., *Klaeber's 'Beowulf'*, p. xxxii.

the start of the next fitt.<sup>82</sup> He also never again writes the fitt number in the first line of the new fitt, instead keeping it at the end of the previous section.

Fitt numbers in *Judith* are positioned in the same way: aligned right of centre in the space remaining at the end of the final line of the previous section. There are only three: x on 199 (BL202)r; XI on 202 (BL205)r; and XII on 204 (BL207)v, all shown in Figure 61. As shown, only the first is tight for space, and – being a concise numeral – the scribe faced no challenges in writing it. These few numbers provide little evidence for Scribe B's engagement. They are broadly similar in appearance to those in *Beowulf*: perhaps the prime difference in presentation is that they are all followed by a point, and XI is preceded by one, too. This last is also the only fitt number that is in a different shade of ink from the surrounding letters, and it is possible that it was written at a different time. Kiernan argues that x and XI in *Judith* “were certainly written by someone other than the scribe”.<sup>83</sup> I cannot be so sure, but it is possible that there is another hand here, perhaps that third hand which seems to intervene in Scribe B's text on a few occasions.<sup>84</sup> If the scholarly consensus about the length of *Judith* is correct, the poem probably started at the opening of the fitt numbered IX, of which we now have only the ending. The fitt numbering would therefore have been continuous through one or more texts before; this sequencing would make it more likely that divisions and numbers came from the exemplar. It is, then, just possible that divisions were imposed on *Beowulf* when it was brought into a collection with *Judith* and whatever preceded it. Such broad conclusions cannot be sustained by the slight evidence base, but some suggestions can still be made about the scribe's own preferences.

Judging from his willingness to exclude sectional numbers on isolated occasions, Scribe B seems to prefer to use them where possible but not to find them necessary. This could support Kiernan's suggestion that he did not write any in *Judith*. Fitt numbers might, then, be an item on the list of aesthetically ideal textual features which can be discarded if the primary objective – of fitting the text into the number of pages available – overrides it. That on each occasion the scribe takes up the numerical sequence without any problems

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82 Compare E.C. Teviotdale's argument of the Cotton Troper (London, BL, Cotton MS Caligula A. xiv, dated to 1060) that “[a] system for the minor decoration of the book was only arrived at as the work was accomplished”, and so the beginning is less varied and sophisticated than the end. ‘The Making of the Cotton Troper’, *England in the Eleventh Century*, ed. Hicks (1992), 301–316, p. 304.

83 ‘Reformed Codex’.

84 Lucas sees them as clearly by Scribe B, ‘Place of *Judith*’, n. 37 p. 477.

at the start of the subsequent fitt suggests (*contra* Fulk) that they were in his exemplar; that they could be excluded suggests that, as with *Andreas* (but not with *Elene*) in the Vercelli Book, it is the division of a text into sections, rather than the numbering of those sections, which he expected to matter to his readers. The fitt divisions in *Elene* more or less match the likely source's chapter divisions; in *Andreas*, the correspondence is less close and fitts tend to cover the contents of about two source chapters.<sup>85</sup> This makes it plausible that fitts were used by translators of Latin texts and introduced into works like *Beowulf* as readers began to expect them. The apparent importance of the divisions above the numbers perhaps implies an expectation of a continuous reading over a number of occasions rather than any anticipated use of fitt numbers as reference points.

More certainty about Scribe B's preferences can, like Scribe A's, be seen in his use of capitals. As with so much else, his practice varies from that of his colleague. Where Scribe A's capitals are always written in the left hand margin and could have been written at almost any time, Scribe B's are partly embedded into the first two lines of text: they must have been written as he worked on the main text. It is worth noting here that the Nowell Codex is ruled without marginal double lines, usually used in higher-grade manuscripts to indicate the placement of capitals.<sup>86</sup> Possibly, Scribe B is more used to working in such documents than A, who places his capitals in the margins anyway. Given that both his preferred script and his capitalisation practice are different from Scribe A's, it is particularly striking, as shown in Figure 62, that they use the same square capital *G* and similar *H* in *Beowulf*. Scribe B also uses an interesting pointed form of *P* and rounded *O* and *D*, both similar to Scribe A's forms in the poem. No less significant is that Scribe B's capitalisation in *Judith* is different in execution: *H* shares the same basic shape, but both occurrences in the scriptural text (on 199 (BL202)r and 202 (BL205)r) are decorated and larger than those he uses in *Beowulf*.<sup>87</sup> The decorated capitals of *Judith* can tentatively be connected with Scribe A's embellished *O*'s in *St Christopher*, both probably from the same exemplar. *Judith*'s other major capital – *S* on 204 (BL207)v – is broadly similar to those employed in *Beowulf*. The relative lack of balance in this capital letter, however, suggests that it was reshaped to the space, and perhaps written

85 I am grateful to Richard North for these observations on the Vercelli texts.

86 Gameson, 'Material Fabric', p. 70.

87 Kiernan uses the different *H* forms in *Beowulf* and *Judith* to further his case for *Judith* as a separate project, and suggests that they may have been written by a different hand altogether, 'Reformed Codex'.



FIGURE 62 Scribe B's G (173 (BL176)r) and H (198 (BL201)r) in *Beowulf*; H (202 (BL205)r) and S (204 (BL207)v) in *Judith*, exhibiting similar forms to Scribe A in *Beowulf* and embellishing in *Judith*, all resized for comparison; cf. Figures 40 and 42.

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after the main text. That is, variation here may be due to pragmatic rather than stylistic choices. As we have seen, where a scribe's practice varies between texts (like Scribe B's *H*), but is also consistent with another scribe's practice in the same text (like *H* and *G* in *Beowulf*), we have an indication that the exemplar was faithfully copied.<sup>88</sup> In certain aspects of his work, then, Scribe B – like his colleague – seems to be trying to reproduce what he sees in front of him. This effort is by no means consistent or comprehensive enough to be described as a facsimile: some exemplar features, such as fitt numbers, can be disregarded at will; and the form of *S* may follow his *habitus* rather than any other pattern. But this aspect of his work suggests that he shared the same concerns as Scribe A in echoing some exemplar forms, enhancing the impression of a project with clearly set objectives.

### Minor Capitals

Scribe B uses fewer minor capitals than Scribe A: an average of 0.21 per page of *Beowulf* (one every five pages) and 0.31 per page of *Judith* (one almost every three pages) compared with Scribe A's average of 0.62 per page of *Beowulf* (more than one every other page), and rather more in the prose texts. This usage reinforces the probability that placement of minor capitals did not have to be copied from the exemplar but could be determined by the scribe.<sup>89</sup> He uses eleven minor capitals in *Beowulf*, as below:

88 Klegraf, 'Faithful Copying', pp. 207 & 211.

89 Compare Teviotdale, 'Cotton Troper', p. 304; Thomson, 'Capital Indications'.



173 (BL176)v.20	line 2002a	biowulf maðelode <sup>90</sup>
176 (BL179)r.20	line 2096a	To lang ys to recenne
176 (BL179)v.12–13	line 2122a	siðode [sor]hfull
185 (BL188)r.17	line 2491a	ic hī þa mað mas <sup>91</sup>
188 (BL191)r.20–v.1	line 2634a	ic ðæt [mæl] geman
190 (BL194)v.10	line 2795a	icðara frætpa
193 (BL197)r.10–11	line 2923a	Ne ic tespe[o] ðeode
193 (BL197)r.15	line 2929a	sona hī sefroða
194 (BL198)r.6	line 2972a	Ne meakte se snella
196 (BL200)r.17	line 3089a	ic pæs þær inne
196 (BL200)v.7	line 3103a	uton ne efstan

There are possible links to be seen between this usage and the themes of the poem, though they are not as clear as Scribe A's. Three instances occur in Beowulf's account of Grendel and his Mother, which recalls Scribe A's use of minor capitals during the Grendel fight. Two occur in moments commemorating heroic values, when Beowulf recalls his loyalty to Hygelac and when Wiglaf recalls Beowulf's greatness as a lord. Three are in the Messenger's speech about Ongentheow. The remaining three occur in passages concerning treasure, when Beowulf looks at the Dragon's gold and when Wiglaf invites the Geats to direct their gaze thither. It may also be worth noting that these treasure passages involve the kind of gazing at marvels, and forms of the verb *sceawian*, which Orchard has identified as drawn on in the translation of *Alexander*.<sup>92</sup> Scribe A also uses a number of minor capitals at a corresponding passage in his stint, on 163(BL166)r–164(BL167)v, which opens with the Danes on the edge of Grendel's Mother's Mere.

It is tempting to argue, on the basis of Scribe A's focused use of minor capitals at similar points, that Scribe B has an interest (or an expectation of a reader's interest) in these ideas. There again, almost any passage in *Beowulf* (or *Alexander*) is about either monsters, or treasure, or heroic values: there are

90 As discussed above, Kiernan suggests that this is a deliberate use to indicate that the *-i*-form is the correct spelling of the name, *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, p. xxvii, but has not been followed.

91 O'Brien O'Keeffe cautions against reading too many capital *i*'s in the Exeter Book, noting that extended minims are sometimes used by its scribes to distinguish undotted scribal *i* from other minims, *Visible Song*, n. 5 pp. 156–157. I am confident that the four *i*'s I read here are being given prominence, but the first is the least certain.

92 *Companion*, p. 30 ff. Two of these passages are also highlighted by a reader's *f*-shaped marks, discussed in Appendix 4.

many sites where this argument would predict capitals where there are none.<sup>93</sup> It is probably more significant that all eleven of Scribe B's uses occur in both a-verses and in speeches. Five are in Beowulf's speeches: three when narrating his Danish adventures to Hygelac; one in his melancholy speech; one as he gazes on the Dragon's gold. Three are in the Messenger's speech as he foretells doom for the Geats at the hands of the Swedes. Three are in Wiglaf's speeches: first as he urges the reluctant companions to join their king in the dragon fight; the final two as he invites the Geats to look at the treasure. While much of *Beowulf* is taken up with speech-making, much is not, and this exclusive use is interesting. The scribes of Junius 11 give speeches a certain amount of prominence; perhaps they required exceptional use of punctuation to aid delivery.<sup>94</sup>

Another striking element in the use of minor capitals is, again, uneven distribution through the manuscript: three in his part of gathering 11; two in gathering 12; six in gathering 13. This looks as if they are increasingly used as the text builds to a climax, and stands in parallel to the increasing coincidence of half-line and side ending, and indeed the increasing density of copying. And, given how infrequently he uses minor capitals, it may be significant that there are two on 193 (BL197)r, one each on the recto and verso of 176 (BL179), and one each on the recto and verso of 196 (BL200). Minor capital *N*, shown in Figure 63, occurs only twice, on successive rectos. This can be compared with the enlarged *a* in *Da*, which occurs on both 189a(197) (BL192)r and two sides later on 189 (192)v. A third reading of Scribe B's minor capitals, then, would see them simply clustering when the scribe happened to use them once, and

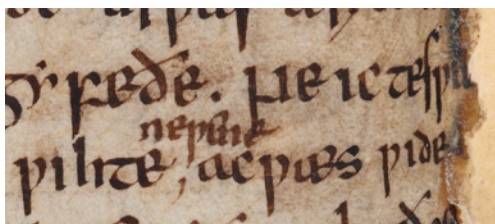


FIGURE 63 Scribe B's *N* form on 193 (BL197)r:10, crossed by a correction.

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93 Cf. Thomas Cable: "there is spacing where I cannot explain it, and in other places no spacing where I would expect it to occur", 'Review of Stevick', pp. 49i–ii.

94 Cf. Julia Crick's note that "the use of liturgical punctuation to assist oral delivery[...] suggests the production of manuscripts deliberately designed to assist the delivery of acoustic texts." 'English Vernacular Script', *History of the Book*, ed. Gameson (2012), 174–186, at p. 182.

hence have a form in mind when he came to another instance where it would be appropriate (for whatever reason) to use one.

The five minor capitals in *Judith* are fairly widely spaced through the extant text, and I cannot discern any policy in their use. Somewhat strangely, given the consistent application in *Beowulf*, only two start new ideas: those on 199 (BL202)v.13, poetic line 28, and 201 (BL204)r.12, poetic line 83, the latter at the beginning of a speech. The last two used, on 202 (BL205)v.12, poetic line 143b, and 206 (BL209).6, poetic line 303, are at the start of new manuscript lines. The last of these, which is semi-marginal, could perhaps have been confused with the same word (*laðra*), which occurs on the first line of the side and is at least at the start of a new poetic line, though still in the middle of an idea. The small capital on 200 (BL203)v.18 is in the middle of a manuscript line and of a narrative idea, but starts poetic line 68 which is the last hypermetric line in a sequence which began with poetic line 53, on 200 (BL203)r.19. Unusually for minor capitals in *Judith*, it is preceded by a point. Some intention clearly lies behind this capitalisation, but it is difficult to interpret. It may, perhaps, be taken with the increased coincidence of half-line and side endings – entirely disconnected from the sense of the text – as evidence for Scribe B's interest in metre above all else. But capitalisation is so inconsistently applied that this seems unlikely, and the opening of the hypermetric section is not particularly marked, though there does seem to have been some scribal confusion. The previous poetic line ends "him þe near hete". The final *e* of *hete* has been partially erased, and the *et* ligature may have been overwritten. Perhaps the section was marked in some way in the exemplar, which the scribe initially failed to incorporate into this copy, and was able to react to by the time it ended. The difference between Scribe B's usage of minor capitals in the two poems, when compared with A's work in his different texts, could indicate – as does the evidence of the scribes' approaches to spelling in *Beowulf* – that B was more focused on replicating his exemplars than A. But there is not enough evidence to be certain on this point, and it should be remembered that Scribe A is clearly faithful to aspects of his exemplars in *St Christopher* and *Alexander*.

There is very little correlation between use of minor capitals and use of pointing. The wide discrepancy between the scribes in use of minor capitals, and broad consistency they each show in their use across the different texts they copy, suggests that they are used at the scribes' discretion and not taken from the exemplar. Only two of the minor capitals Scribe B chooses to use coincide with the sequence of folios with a higher rate of pointing – those on recto and verso of 176 (BL179). And 193 (BL197)r, which has *s* and *n* capitalised, has only two points, both immediately preceding capital forms. While one function of points is to precede capitals, this seems to have a different meaning

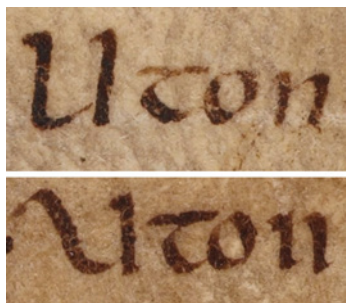


FIGURE 64

*Different u forms used by Scribe A in Alexander (106 (BL109)v.18) and Scribe B in Beowulf (196 (BL200)v.7).*

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from the use of points on their own. Whether this is a different type of scribal interest, or simply faithful copying from the exemplar, it is difficult to know.

Given the correlation between the shapes they deploy for major capitals, it is also interesting that the two scribes use different forms for the minor capitals that can be compared. This reinforces the probability that marginal capitals were taken from the exemplar where minor forms were not. Scribe B's *n* shape is entirely different from Scribe A's. Scribe A's minor *u*, deployed in *Alexander*, is unlike the slightly decorative form used by Scribe B on 196 (BL200)v; both are shown in Figure 64. Scribe B's use of an elegant but space-consuming left arm is particularly remarkable given that he is frantically seeking to conserve space on this side, which contains 57 full half-lines and is exceeded in his work only by the succeeding two sides.

On the whole, then, Scribe B's use of minor capitals is distinct from Scribe A's in *Beowulf*, and it is broadly consistent with the patchiness of his use in *Judith*, enhancing the likelihood that they are deployed at the scribes' discretion. However, where Scribe A's use of minor capitals often seems to fit within a broader policy or sense of engagement, Scribe B's is so infrequent that it is hard to draw any conclusions. Within *Judith* particularly, there is often no evident reason at all to deploy them. They are certainly much more closely associated with the start of new poetic lines than narrative meaning, and are twice used when the start of a new poetic line coincides with the start of a new manuscript line. Tentatively, it seems likely that Scribe B had some sense of the value of minor capitals, that his sense differed from Scribe A's, and that he did not value them as highly as the younger scribe.

### Scribal Decoration

Along with the difficult evidence of his capitals, there are other minor but clear indications of Scribe B's expectation that his work would be looked at by

discerning eyes: he was certainly not uninterested in the value of visual information.<sup>95</sup> An interesting example is his use of variant forms of abbreviation marks. Where Scribe A uses only a straight line, usually for terminal *-m*, Scribe B uses a similar straight bar over *u*, *i*, and *a* for terminal *-m*, and a tilde shape over *g* and *t* to show *-e* or *-en*.<sup>96</sup> Both forms are clearly shown on 204 (BL207) v in *Judith*, shown in Figure 65. The value of the distinction is shown on 205 (BL208)r.15, poetic line 266b, the second image in Figure 65. At this point in copying, he is compressing desperately (copying 51 full half-lines on this side) and using abbreviations wherever possible. So when he comes to a half-line reading “dom gespiðrod” he writes it *dōḡspiðrod*. The different abbreviation marks make the highly compressed text slightly more legible than it would have been with the same form.

As in Figure 53, he also frequently uses an elegant abbreviation mark at the end of *holofern*, although this seems not to vary regardless of the ending required. This may suggest that he was familiar with writing Latin texts; the occasional Caroline inclination of his *a*, especially in *Judith*, may be further evidence that he could use this script when copying Latin. In this context, it may be worth noting that *uton* (which he strangely capitalises on 196 (BL200)v, almost as if it were instinctive) quite frequently opens clauses in homilies. Possibly, Scribe B was more experienced as a copyist of Latin scripture and English homilies than poetry. This would again place him in opposition to Scribe A who, as I have tentatively suggested, may not have known Latin.

Also unlike Scribe A, B's superscript insertions are almost invariably shown by insertion marks, where the number of marks indicate the number of letters inserted. It is possible that these are for his own benefit as corrector, though this seems unlikely: the ink shade of insertion marks and of inserted letters is

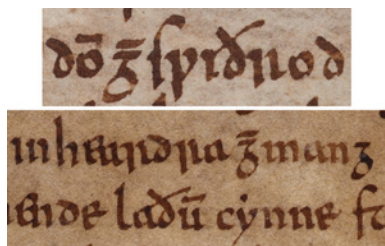


FIGURE 65

*Differentiated tilde forms used by Scribe B on 204 (BL207)v.3–4 and 205 (BL208)r.15.*

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VITELLIUS A. XV.

95 This goes against Doane's argument in 'Scribal Performance', p. 66.

96 Fulk et al., *Klaeber's 'Beowulf'*, describe both forms as a "titulus", but that drawn over *pōn* (for *ponne*) as a "tittle", p. xxx. See Malone, *Nowell Codex* for a full account of the use of abbreviation marks (without distinguishing between shapes), p. 26.

always the same and it is unnecessarily complicated to imagine a first correcting stage of noting how many letters were missed and a second of inserting said letters. A longer insertion on 189a (197) (BL192)r.4 is placed in the margin; its site in the line is indicated by a superscript  $\bar{d}$  and there was an answering  $\bar{d}$ , now mostly lost, in the margin above the additional text. These marks, along with the abbreviation codes, show awareness of a visual reader, and an expectation that the reader would be capable of decoding these marks.

In this context, it is perhaps of interest that his *g* shape, mostly drawn open and with a flat top, frequently has a tilde-shaped top stroke instead, like his mark of abbreviation for succeeding *-e*.<sup>97</sup> The degree of curvature in the line varies considerably; some examples of varied tops to *g* on a single side in *Beowulf* are shown in Figure 3. On a couple of occasions in *Judith*, the curvature is exaggerated: the first time curving considerably down at the front; the second up at the back.<sup>98</sup> I can see no reason or consistency in the use of tilde-shaped rather than flat-topped *g* in either text, save for the fact that, as with so many features of Scribe B's hand, they tend to cluster. On the whole, they seem to be more frequent in *Judith* than *Beowulf*, but this is a very broad impression based on two texts of completely different lengths and cannot be regarded as a fair evaluation.

### Suggestions

This chapter finds more similarities than differences between the features of the work of the two scribes. Like Scribe A, B puts a great deal of effort into presenting his exemplar accurately; like Scribe A, he found it more challenging to do this with *Beowulf* than with his other text. He assumed that he had a reader able to decode and to use a range of letter shapes, abbreviation marks, use of capitals and punctuation, and shape of half-lines on a page: like Scribe A, his text "needed to be seen as well as heard".<sup>99</sup> From fragments of evidence, Scribe B frequently appears to be making localised decisions about how to work. When he chooses to, he can present text in a sophisticated way, deploying variation in letter-form, punctuation including minor capitals, and fitting verse

97 Citing the form as proof that the same hand wrote both *Beowulf* and *Judith*, Sisam calls this a *g* "with the bar so swung over on the left as to form a loop", *'Beowulf' Manuscript*, n. 1 p. 64.

98 At 199 (BL202)r.8 and 202 (BL205)v.20.

99 Crick, 'Sense of the Past', p. 29; on p. 28 she argues that "visual archaism represents the scribal equivalent of efforts of historical reference".

to the page in a manner comparable with the main scribe of Junius 11. He can also compress his hand dramatically and appears at times almost as a trouble-shooter, able to manage the challenges posed to his scriptorium by this project. He is often only able to do so, however, by adopting untidy methods. And despite his clear intention to produce a correct version, including correcting a small number of A's errors, the text of *Beowulf* remains full of problems. This stands alongside the impression of Chapter 4, where Scribe A seems to have been given a clear directive but was not entirely capable of delivering it. Given the difficulty he had with fulfilling this function to the satisfaction of modern editors, and even at points to his own satisfaction, it does not seem likely that B was the controlling intelligence behind the manuscript. The slight evidence that suggests a third hand intervening at points to restore and correct Scribe B's work may show us this controlling intelligence or, perhaps more likely, a later reader. The manuscript certainly attracted the attention of some later readers, some of whom probably made parts harder rather than easier to read.

In a number of ways, Scribe B's work is characterised by inconsistent performance between gatherings. This makes it particularly frustrating that so little of his work is extant. An additional gathering of work on *Judith*, for instance, would provide evidence of how consistent he was in work on that text compared with his copying of *Beowulf*. Michael Gullick's work on the speed of copying suggests that a reasonable average for a scribe to copy in a single day was 150–200 manuscript lines of text, with "a few" scribes able to write more.<sup>100</sup> Scribe B's gathering of *Judith* contains 320 manuscript lines; his first of *Beowulf* contains 260 and the last two have 420: we have 1,000 lines of his work, equivalent to somewhere between five and seven days' work by Gullick's calculation. Possibly, as tentatively suggested above of Scribe A, Scribe B conceived of his work in daily half-gathering units, and the inconsistency between and even within gatherings is due to daily checking of progress against the exemplar.

My arguments about the production of the codex thus find a broad consistency in some points of style between the two scribes, with some evidence to suggest that the texts lay in three different exemplars, in different condition and with different linguistic features, prior to the production of the Nowell Codex. The manuscript becomes an intentionally composite collection, with the requirement that its scribes retained differences between texts as well as drew them together. This project plainly represented a significant challenge to both scribes, and a challenge which they recognised, given the efforts they made to show that they had corrected their work. The Nowell Codex may have

100 Gullick, 'How Fast Did Scribes Write?', p. 52.

been a relatively low status manuscript, copied by scribes limited in capability and used to train a draughtsman and possibly also an inexperienced scribe; it is more likely that it represents an over-ambitious project undertaken by a secular or religious establishment which took advantage of a scriptorium that, for whatever reason, contained an interesting combination of texts along with an experienced scribe, another well practised in the newly fashionable script, and a capable draughtsman willing to work with others. It certainly seems to have remained of significance to whoever held it for some time, to judge by the attempts to restore text and the possibility that a third hand sought to correct Scribe B's work on *Beowulf*. Either way, the conception and oversight of such a project would have to rely on a sophisticated intelligence, a person who had readers in mind, and who was interested in the drawing together of heroic and religious worlds late in the Anglo-Saxon period. The final chapter will work towards making some concluding suggestions about the Nowell Codex in its context by considering some other communal manuscript productions of the tenth and eleventh centuries.



## Communal Manuscript Production in Late Anglo-Saxon England

I have suggested in Chapter 2 that, based on its palaeography and interests, the Nowell Codex is most likely to have been produced somewhere in Wulfstan's sphere of influence. I have further argued that there is no compelling palaeographical reason to force it earlier than 1016, and suggested in Chapter 1 that the apparent project of uniting these texts is clearly more likely to have been undertaken during Cnut's reign than Æthelred's. This leads to a Mercian production, perhaps around Lichfield based on the likely sixteenth-century provenance, somewhere between 1016 and 1025. However, as I hope has been made clear throughout, almost every part of this proposal is based on the most likely reading of difficult and limited evidence: on what seems to me the most probable of a range of possibilities. It would therefore be overly reductive, and perhaps unhelpfully provocative, to conclude this study by setting it in the context of Mercia in the last years of Archbishop Wulfstan's life.

Instead, this final chapter reflects on the type of scribal production I have argued the Nowell Codex to be: an innovative project engaging with the present by utilising the past, combining a wide range of texts for a new purpose, conceived by an individual and executed by a team whose abilities did not match the ambition of the project. To that end, this chapter considers scribal culture in late Anglo-Saxon England, focused on manuscripts produced by pairs or teams of scribes. Given its containment of *Beowulf*, the Nowell Codex is too often set apart and regarded in isolation; it is therefore often measured against scholars' expectations of what a manuscript containing *Beowulf* should be like, rather than against manuscript practice in its own time.<sup>1</sup> In this chapter, then, I consider some other manuscripts from Anglo-Saxon England in the tenth and eleventh centuries, many of which have already been noted in preceding discussion. These have, of course, been selected simply on the basis that I find them helpful in thinking about the Nowell Codex: they are intended to be neither a comprehensive nor even a representative sample of manuscript culture

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1 Cf. Schipper's description of "the *Beowulf* phenomenon" in 'Style and Layout of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts', p. 157.

in the period.<sup>2</sup> Nor are the case studies used here intended to be exhaustive as concerns their individual manuscripts: as I hope this volume demonstrates, there is much to be gained from very close engagement with the signs of production and use in even the most well-worn manuscript pages. This discussion is intended to demonstrate some ways in which the processes I have suggested as taking place in the production of the Nowell Codex were fairly widespread in late Anglo-Saxon England.

Some illustrative examples of the communal use of manuscripts are given to set the context of different attitudes towards, and different roles played by, texts and the artefacts containing them. This discussion is also used to reflect on tenth- and eleventh-century engagements with the past through narratives and manuscripts. Some collaborations of two or more scribes deploying different scripts and of different abilities are considered, including discussion of indications of the relative status of the scribes and suggestions about how work may have been managed. As noted in the Introduction and Chapter 2, it is not always possible to distinguish between scribes with certainty and in some of these manuscripts different scholars have seen different numbers of hands. As with the Nowell Codex, scribes have also been given variant names in different discussions. Throughout, I use the same convention as I have with the Nowell Codex, naming the scribes A, B, C, etc., according to where they come in the manuscript as it now stands, and assuming that they were male.<sup>3</sup> Where relevant, I cross-reference with Scragg's numbers in his *Conspectus* and seek to make it clear where my naming (or identification) varies from other readings. In some cases – as I note when they occur – I have not consulted manuscripts directly, instead drawing them into this survey on the basis of other discussions. It is my hope that this chapter sets the Nowell Codex in a context of the creative production and use of texts by a range of communities in late Anglo-Saxon England, and that it sets this study of that manuscript in a context of much more exciting work to be done to comprehend Anglo-Saxon engagement with and shaping of textual meaning through manuscript production and use.

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2 Some manuscripts not considered here which would fit well into this context include: CCCC 41; CCCC 140; Cambridge, CCC MS 198; CCCC 419 and 421 Part 2; Cambridge, University Library MS Ii. 4. 6; London, BL, Additional MS 61735; Claudius B. iv (the Old English Hexateuch); London, BL, Cotton MS Cleopatra B. xiii, fols. 59–90; London, BL, Cotton MS Domitian A. vii, fols. 15–45; Otho B. ii + B. x; London, BL, Cotton MS Tiberius B. i, fols. 3–111; London, BL, Cotton MS Titus A. iv; London, BL, Cotton MS Vitellius D. xvii, fols. 4–92; London, BL, Harley MS 585; London, BL, Harley MS 3271; Royal 13 A. xv; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud MS Miscellaneous 482 (1054).

3 More careful consideration of scribal gender is needed.

### Communal Use of Manuscripts

Manuscripts were, of course, normally created in order to be used.<sup>4</sup> It is inevitable that the most heavily used pages are precisely those that have not normally survived, as preservation inclines towards keeping higher status and clean copies rather than those soiled by application in the field.<sup>5</sup> Even so, there are multiple instances of older manuscripts subsequently used by a community as a site of record for important documents; it is not unusual to find charters, records of lands, and manumissions in the endleaves of gospel books or sacramentaries.<sup>6</sup> This is of course both eminently practical – a positive use for spare parchment in a place it is unlikely to be mislaid – but also symbolic of a community's present being grafted into the history of their house and into sacred time, an action "designed to communicate with God as much as with man."<sup>7</sup>

Bodley 579, the Leofric Missal, was produced in the late ninth or early tenth century in northern France.<sup>8</sup> It was probably made for Canterbury Christ Church, and the additions discussed here were likely made there. Those of most interest in this context are early eleventh-century manumissions in seven different hands on fol. 8v.<sup>9</sup> The differences between the hands, and particularly the clearly early features of the first two, show that the same page was used by a

4 On marks of use see e.g. Kathryn M. Rudy, 'Dirty Books: Quantifying Patterns of Use in Medieval Manuscripts Using a Densitometer', *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* 2 (2010), online at <<http://www.jhna.org/index.php/past-issues/volume-2-issue-1-2/129-dirty-books>>, last visited 13/7/16.

5 Compare Wilcox, 'Junius 85 and 86', from whom I borrow the expression "in the field" as applied in this context. See esp. pp. 351–355 where he shows that the last gathering of Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hatton MS 115 (5135), fols. 1–147, and fols. 10–18 of Oxford, Bodleian Library, Auctarium MS F. 4. 32, the Classbook of St Dunstan, both circulated as booklets possibly lent out by a central body and used by different hands in day-to-day activities; on independently circulating booklets see P.R. Robinson, 'Self-Contained Units in Composite Manuscripts of the Anglo-Saxon Period', *ASE* 7 (1978), 231–238.

6 See e.g. Keynes' comments on this practice in 'Additions in Old English', p. 81. Other notable examples are the York Gospels, fols. 10–161, which has sermons, a royal letter, an inventory, prayers, and a list of sureties added to the endleaves of a gospel book; and Domitian A vii, fols. 15–45, the Durham *Liber Vitae*, with three grants written by two scribes on fol. 47. For a more sustained and complex use of the margins of CCCC 41 "as a kind of an archive", see Rowley, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, pp. 164–165 and references.

7 Gameson, 'Exeter Book', p. 137, on the recording of Leofric's Exeter inventory in gospelbooks.

8 The manuscript can be viewed online as part of *Early Manuscripts at Oxford University* project. It is Gneuss and Lapidge, *Handlist*, §585 and Ker, *Catalogue*, §315.

9 Hands §865–§871 in Scragg, *Conspectus*.

range of different individuals “over a substantial period of time.”<sup>10</sup> Most are not particularly strong, using inconsistent forms and having difficulty following ruled lines. This kind of communal use of a significant volume over a lengthy period is typical of an attitude towards manuscripts: valued as both emblematic of authority and the significant past of a community, but simultaneously working documents to be developed and supplemented, with individuals integrating themselves and their stories into that communal history.

One such intervention in an authoritative manuscript is in Harley 208, with the insertion of a line apparently from *Beowulf* beneath a letter from Alcuin.<sup>11</sup> Stokes suggests that it is most likely to be a pen trial, particularly given its association with nearby exercises using Caroline letter-forms, and in doing so he is following Ker in classifying it as a “scribble” rather than a meaningful interaction with the text.<sup>12</sup> However, it seems an apt comment on the text itself.<sup>13</sup> Alcuin is defending his monks against charges brought by Archbishop Theodulf, disputing Theodulf’s account of a brawl. He has to admit that he was not present in the church during the incident and has had to rely on his monks’ reports. As part of the defence, he notes that both the king’s investigators and the opposing party agree with parts of his narrative, and argues that his brothers’ accounts can be trusted:

Nam illis praesentibus sanctum allatum est evangelium, ligno sanctae crucis superposito; quoscumque iusserunt iurare ex fratribus fecerunt.<sup>14</sup>

*For in their presence the holy gospel was brought forth, with wood from the holy cross on top; and whoever out of the brothers was commanded to swear did so.*<sup>15</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Stokes, *English Vernacular Minuscule*, p. 44.

<sup>11</sup> Noted in Chapter 2 as possible evidence for knowledge of *Beowulf* in northern England. The manuscript can be viewed online as part of the British Library’s *Digitised Manuscripts* website. It is Gneuss and Lapidge, *Handlist*, §417; Ker, *Catalogue*, §229. Harley 208 was produced at Saint-Denis in the ninth century. It came to York, where the annotation was made, at some point in the tenth century.

<sup>12</sup> Stokes, *English Vernacular Minuscule*, p. 180, with the discussion of “scribbles” p. 177, following Ker, *Catalogue*, §229. The alphabet is at the top of fol. 87v, another brief letter practice at its foot, the extract from the *Pater Noster* at the top of fol. 88r, and the line from *Beowulf* at its foot. Stokes mistakenly calls it London, BL, Harley MS 526, fols. 1–27, in his discussion. The hand is Scragg, *Conspectus*, §635.

<sup>13</sup> Parkes, ‘*Rædan, areccan, smeagan*’, p. 19; Orchard, ‘Word Made Flesh’, p. 309.

<sup>14</sup> The letter is §249 in Alcuin, *Epistolae*, ed. E. Dümmler, MGH Epist. iv (Berlin, 1895), pp. 401–404; this quotation at p. 403.

<sup>15</sup> Translation based on that in Allott, *Alcuin of York*, §116, pp. 123–126; at p. 125.

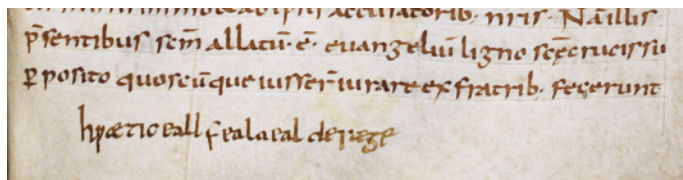


FIGURE 66 A reader's pen trial, or possibly a response to Alcuin's letter, on Harley 208, fol. 88r.

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Beneath this sentence, as shown in Figure 66, a reader has written “hwæt ic eall feala ealde s̄æge” (“Listen, I [have heard?] very many ancient tales”).<sup>16</sup> As Parkes (following Ker) suggests, this

appears to be a reminiscence of Beowulf 869 where the poet refers to a *scop*'s skill in drawing upon many ancient oral traditions – reflecting, perhaps, a reader's [lack of] confidence in the reliability of the written word.<sup>17</sup>

The scene is during the journey back from Grendel's mere, with Danes and Geats jubilant at the defeat of Grendel, when an unnamed Danish thane celebrates with stories in verse:

Hwilum cyninges þegn  
guma gilphlæden, gidða gemyndig,  
se ðe ealfela ealdgesegena  
word gemunde, word oþer fand  
soðe gebunden. (lines 867b-71a)

*Sometimes a thane of the king, a man laden with boasts, with a memory of songs, who recalled the words of all kinds of ancient tales, found new words bound together truthfully.*

The *þegn* does not deliver stories just as he received them: he combines different narratives and ‘finds’ new words for them. The speaker (and the poet) elevate Beowulf by comparing him with Sigemund and contrasting him with Heremod; the story told may be as new as the word-combinations, for the fictional teller if not for the poet. As far as Harley's annotating reader was

<sup>16</sup> See also Orchard, ‘Word Made Flesh’, p. 309, whose translation I follow here.

<sup>17</sup> ‘Rædan, areccan, smeagan’, p. 19. Ker, *Catalogue*, §229, suggests the connection with Beowulf line 869.

concerned, Alcuin, hearing a range of different stories from his monks and re-working them for Charlemagne's consumption, is operating in a similar way. Parkes' interpretation of the annotation, as a reader mocking Alcuin's claim that words are reliable evidence, is plausible; it may simply be that Alcuin's method of relying on oral testimony, or even perhaps that of referring to the words of the accusing king's envoys and the Gospel to ratify his own view, brought the old poetic style to mind. The annotator's use of *hwæt* may echo the conventional epic opening, reflecting a sense in which Alcuin is 'performing' here, seeking support from the emperor in a somewhat uncomfortable political situation.<sup>18</sup>

Either way, the use of a line from a vernacular heroic poem to comment on the Latin writing of a respected churchman is of immediate interest, and demonstrates the continued vitality of *Beowulf* or texts like it, at least in York. The annotating hand is fairly scrappy, perhaps written in haste, and Square in aspect though with slight Caroline features to some letters; his hand in the other pen trials is more strongly Caroline. This gives us a reader who wrote in Latin and English, who was using margins to practise a script, but who seems to have reverted to a more familiar script and the vernacular when commenting on the text, if that is what he is doing.

This marginal note strongly implies that texts such as *Beowulf* were not read in the context of pure entertainment, but were seen by at least some readers as containing memorable moments of wisdom or witticism, rather as lines from Shakespeare are today. That at least one Anglo-Saxon reader was able to bring an old text into a new context, and to make meaning out of interaction between very different texts, is a useful analogy for the interpretation of the Nowell Codex. If Parkes' reading of the use of the poem to comment ironically on Alcuin's honesty is accepted, it also shows us an alert and fairly cynical reader in York in the second half of the tenth century, prepared to interact forcefully with a manuscript to express his own perspective.

Dorothy Whitelock argued that Harley 208 was probably known to Wulfstan.<sup>19</sup> This is on the slight but fairly convincing basis that the collection of Alcuin letters in London, BL, Cotton Vespasian A. xiv, fols. 114–179, was certainly made for him, and it has no overlap with the letters contained in Harley

18 Though as noted by Orchard, 'Word Made Flesh', p. 309, Jeff Opland suggests that this could be the opening of a different heroic poem entirely in *Anglo-Saxon Oral Poetry: A Study of the Traditions* (New Haven, 1980), p. 186.

19 'Wulfstan at York', *Franciplegus: Medieval and Linguistic Studies in Honor of Francis Peabody Magoun Jr.*, eds. Jess B. Bessinger and Robert P. Creed (New York, 1965), 214–231, at pp. 218–219.

208.<sup>20</sup> Whitelock's proposition, then, is that Vespasian A. xiv was made to "supplement" Harley 208, effectively forming a two-volume set at York of Alcuin's correspondence.<sup>21</sup> I have not been able to identify any of the indications of close reading and annotation from Wulfstan and his circle in Harley 208 that are present in Vespasian A. xiv; the connection is far from certain. But the key point here is that Harley 208 shows us a lively, thoughtful engagement with the past and an awareness of the way in which texts can be utilised to comment on one another.

A more functional intervention can be seen in London, BL, Royal MS 12 D. xvii, 'Bald's Leechbook', into which an eleventh-century hand has inserted an additional remedy on fol. 49r, as shown in Figure 67.<sup>22</sup> The normalised text would read:

Wip þa blacan blegene syle þam men etan twegen croppas oððe þry of  
þære wyrte þe man on þreo wisan hated myxenplante.

*For black blains, give to the man to eat two or three shoots of that herb which  
is called in three ways the nightshade plant.*

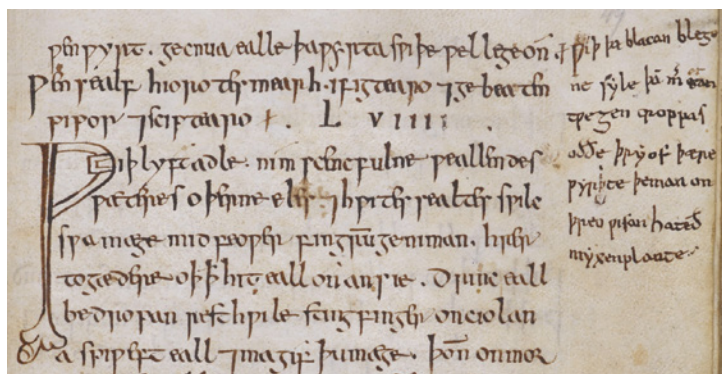


FIGURE 67 A user's addition to Bald's Leechbook, Royal 12. D. xvii, fol. 49r.

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- 20 On Vespasian A. xiv and its connection with Wulfstan, see in most detail Colin Chase's introduction to his *Two Alcuin Letter-Books*, Toronto Medieval Latin Texts 5 (Toronto, 1975), esp. pp. 7–8.
- 21 'Wulfstan at York', p. 219.
- 22 As it is in an earlier manuscript, the hand is not noted as an example of eleventh-century script by Stokes or Scragg. Thomas Cockayne calls it "a different and later hand", *Leechdoms, Wortcunning and Starcraft of Early England*, vol. 2 (London, 1863), n. 1 p. 128, and the British Library catalogue describes it as a "remedy added to the margin in the 11th century". The manuscript can be viewed online as part of the British Library's *Digitised Manuscripts* project. It is Gneuss and Lapidge, *Handlist* §479 and Ker, *Catalogue*, §264.

In a very short piece of writing, it is striking just how inconsistent letter formation is.<sup>23</sup> The scribe also made some odd mistakes as he was writing.<sup>24</sup> The insertion is entirely appropriate: a fourth type of boil, joining the others treated in §58 of the text. It must have been made by someone familiar with medical procedures. Quite feasibly, as evidenced most clearly by the expansive second *g* and the strange mistakes in execution, the user was writing while using the book in an infirmary or other non-ideal writing environment, focusing on the cure and those around him rather than the scribing process: a more extreme instance of the irregular slant to Durham A.IV.19 fol. 84, which Jolly suggests as an indication that Aldred was writing on a sloped portable writing surface.<sup>25</sup> We are, then, seeing here a tenth-century manuscript being used and supplemented, in the eleventh century, and probably in a working environment as opposed to the library or an individual cell. This is manuscript as communal property, being left presumably in the hands of a specific member of that community to utilise and expand as he saw fit.

More systematic alterations can be seen in Julius E. vii, an eleventh-century copy of Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*, with the additions of Euphrosyne, Eustace, Mary of Egypt and the Seven Sleepers.<sup>26</sup> A corrector, working not long after the manuscript was made and perhaps shortly after 1032, made a large number of minor alterations to the text.<sup>27</sup> Most significantly, he seems to have elucidated a difficult part of Ælfric's homily on the Maccabees on fol. 140v, and to have adapted the details of Edmund's resting place in his *passio* on fol. 206v, updating to the new location of his remains.<sup>28</sup> It is worth noting that in both

23 For instance, a strikingly angular loop for *þ* is used twice in the first line with a much rounder loop in the second, and some variations thereafter; of the two instances of *g*, one is neat and contained and the other sprawls as if the book had been jogged while the scribe wrote.

24 So, *pyrte* has been corrected, perhaps from *pyrrte* though that cannot be certain and there seems to be an unnecessarily added superscript *i*; *etan* seems to have been immediately corrected from *ecan*; superscript *et* was added later by the same hand.

25 Jolly, *Durham A.IV.19*, p. 77, with the page shown as her image 10 on p. 62.

26 Online as part of the British Library's *Digitised Manuscripts* project. Gneuss and Lapidge, *Handlist*, §339; Ker, *Catalogue*, §162. A number of homiletic manuscripts were consistently used for long periods, receiving additions into the twelfth century, e.g. CCC 419 and 421 Part 2; Cambridge, Trinity College Library MS B. 15. 34 (369). On the huge success of Ælfric's homiletic programme, see Wilcox, 'Junius 85 and 86', esp. pp. 346–349.

27 Geoffrey Needham, 'Additions and Alterations in Cotton Ms. Julius E vii', *RES* 9 (1958), 160–164. The hand is Scragg, *Conspectus*, §501.

28 Working from the earlier foliation, Needham calls it fol. 204v. Cf. the apparently updated version of the *Encomium Emmae Reginae* with an ending adapted to post-1042 England, discussed by Timothy Bolton, 'A Newly Emergent Mediaeval Manuscript Containing



of these sites the corrector works hard to integrate changes into the text, as shown here for fol. 206v in Figure 68. The alterations are too extensive to be entirely smooth, but there is a clear interest in integration into the text wherever possible, with perhaps an attempt on line 22 to adapt to the main scribe's *g* form, given that the corrector uses a closed loop in both instances here, and does not in his alteration on fol. 107v.

Similar adaptations can be seen in another Ælfric manuscript, London, BL, Cotton MS Vitellius C. v, a copy of the *Catholic Homilies* dated to "s. x/xi".<sup>29</sup> The original production had one main scribe with two others contributing brief stints throughout.<sup>30</sup> Subsequently, a fourth scribe, D, made additions on fols. 236v–254v, and then later still, significant interpolations were added

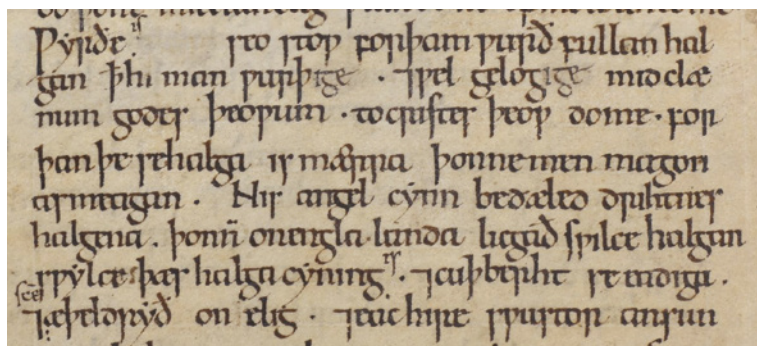


FIGURE 68 Eleventh-century updates to Ælfric's text on Edmund in *Julius E. vii*, fol. 206v.21–28.

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*Encomium Emmae Reginae* with the Only Known Complete Text of the Recension Prepared for King Edward the Confessor', *Mediaeval Studies* 19 (2009), 205–221.

- 29 The manuscript, which was quite badly damaged in the Ashburnham house fire, can be viewed online as part of the British Library's *Digitised Manuscripts* project. Gneuss and Lapidge §403; Ker §220. Discussed by Wilcox in *ASMMF* 17, whom I follow closely here.
- 30 Scragg, *Conspectus*, §612–§614; my A, B, and C. Although C's first appearance comes before B's, I have followed the order B–C as to reverse them from the normal sequence would create more confusion. This fascinating and complex manuscript deserves more study, and it is perhaps inevitable that I see these hands starting and sometimes ending in slightly different places from other readers: Scribe B on fol. 186v.7–14 and fol. 191r.13–26; Scribe C on fols. 168v.1–4, 185r.14–19, and 191v.1–192v.23. Scragg records Scribe C's second stint as lines 33–39, which must be in error as there are only 26 lines on the side, and B's first stint as 186v.1–6 which I see as Scribe A continuing. In the manuscript's entry in *DigiPal*, Stokes and Brookes note Scribe B only on fol. 191r.13–26 and Scribe C only on fols. 191v–192v. Wilcox notes the scribe of each item in his description of the contents, *ASMMF* 17, pp. 25–35.

throughout by Scribe E.<sup>31</sup> Scragg sees up to three other hands making brief contributions.<sup>32</sup> Distinguishing so many different hands in short texts is not easy, and Wilcox's caution is perhaps the wisest response: simply noting "various contemporary or near-contemporary OE corrections and insertions throughout the text".<sup>33</sup>

However, the most important point in the immediate context of alterations and re-use are Scribe E's interpolations, "painstakingly" reworking the manuscript in the mid-eleventh century.<sup>34</sup> He inserted or recopied text in eight sites, and deleted and replaced text in five.<sup>35</sup> He added enlarged capitals for sense divisions, frequently pointed at the middle or end of rhythmic lines, and used hyphens frequently. He also added a table of contents, now the reversed first folio, giving numbers to many of the homilies and was therefore presumably also responsible for inserting those numbers in red through the manuscript. This concern for presentation and clarity suggests someone likely to be using the manuscript for reference and for reading aloud. We could be reminded of the use of capitals in the Nowell *St Christopher* and *Alexander*, the selection of a particular minor *o* for rubrication in *Alexander*, Scribe B's exclusive use of small capitals in speeches, and perhaps his sudden interest in punctuation for a short stretch of *Beowulf*, which could all conceivably be related to oral delivery or clarity for readers.

Scribe E's interpolating process in Vitellius C. v must have been astonishingly careful. While he frequently violates the right hand margin, I see no indications of concern about spacing as he approaches the end of his lengthy insertions. Often – as at the end of fol. 17v to enable the addition of fols. 18–21, or at the

31 My Scribes D and E are Scragg, *Conspectus*, §615 and §616; Stokes' 'Older Additions' and 'Newer Additions' hands; Peter Clemoes, ed., *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies First Series: Text*, EETS 17 (Oxford, 2003), Hb and Hc, followed by Wilcox, *ASMMF* 17.

32 On fol. 88v (his §612a), fols. 161v, 162r, 163v, and 164r (his §612b), and fol. 192v (his §612c).

33 *ASMMF* 17, p. 21. Of further potential interest is a sixteenth-century hand on fols. 2r–3r, apparently copying the text and to some degree the letter-forms on fols. 1, 4 and 5.

34 Jonathan Wilcox, pers. corr., 5/7/16. I am grateful to Prof. Wilcox for discussing this manuscript and many other issues of scribal identification and manuscript production with me.

35 Insertions are at fols. 4–5, 18r–21v, 33r–34v, 69r–75v, 95, 131r–48v, 169r–85v, and 229r–31v; deletions with replacements at fols. 17v.17–26, 35r.1–11, 96r.1–3 and lines 21–26, and 168v.15–26. See Wilcox, *ASMMF* 17, pp. 23–24. Wilcox does not note fol. 96r.21–26, but I think it quite certain, and follow Scragg, in seeing it here. Scragg gives it as lines 21–30, but this must be in error as there are only 26 lines on this side. I am not confident of the additions to fol. 168v, which Scragg sees from line 24 only and I do not see at all, though the side is faded, particularly towards the foot.

start of fol. 35 finishing off the addition of fols. 33 and 34 – he erases Scribe A's text and rewrites entire homilies, either because he wanted to change the start or ending of a text or perhaps simply to make the calculation of space more straightforward. But he does not always do so: the lengthy interpolation at fols. 131–148 does not show any signs of concern over space as it comes to an end, yet there was no need to erase and rewrite the two lines of the homily which remain in Scribe A's hand at the start of fol. 149r; the same perfect integration is achieved at the end of fol. 231v, so the seven lines at the start of fol. 232r require no alterations.<sup>36</sup>

We see here, then, a concern to make use of an already interesting, communally produced, copy of Ælfric's text. Scribe E skilfully made the text and manuscript his own, presumably thereby ensuring its relevance in his own community, perhaps about thirty years later than its first production.<sup>37</sup> The kind of curation seen in Julius E. vii and Vitellius C. v, and identified by Wilcox in Junius 85 and 86, can be compared with the retouching hand working to restore Scribe B's text in *Beowulf*.<sup>38</sup> As shown in Figure 69, attempts to clarify an earlier hand, tracing or imitating letter-forms, in Vitellius C. v fol. 177v are



FIGURE 69 *Clumsy attempts to freshen up Scribe E's hand in Vitellius C. v, fol. 177v.27–36; cf. Figure 57 from Nowell Codex fol. 179 (BL182)v.10–13.*

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- 36 Here I am again differing from Scragg, who sees Scribe E writing these two lines. This precision is all the more impressive given that Scribe E uses 36 lines per side where Scribe A used only 26.
- 37 Cf. Jacob Hobson's characterisation of text in eleventh-century England as "not ultimately a stable phenomenon", 'National-Ethnic Narratives in Eleventh-Century Literary Representations of Cnut', *ASE* 43 (2014), 267–295, p. 271.
- 38 Wilcox notes that, on fols. 5r and 6r, the last 5–6 characters have been erased at the end of each line and rewritten at the start of the next in a hand very like that of the main scribe, probably at the point of rebinding, 'Junius 85 and 86', pp. 357–358 and n. 44 p. 356. I have not seen this manuscript.

similar – in both intention and relative clumsiness – to the retouching in Nowell. Integration is also the aspiration, and is achieved with rather more success, by the adaptor working on Julius E. vii. Attempts to make manuscript copies last by restoring, supplementing, and altering them are clearly a trend in scriptoria of this period.

A less respectful instance of re-use can be seen in the first part of London, BL, Harley MS 55, as shown in Figure 70.<sup>39</sup> This is an eleventh-century copy of part of Bald's *Leechbook*, parts of the lawcodes Edgar II and III, a record of lands lost to York, and some 'scribbles', generally assumed to have come from the end of a longer manuscript. Harley 55's provenance is Worcester, though the interest in York lands makes it perhaps a shade more likely that these pages were produced, or at least added to, there.<sup>40</sup> The close association with Wulfstan and the ties between Worcester and York throughout this period make the distinction a purely academic one. Folio 4v is the site of particular interest here: a single manuscript side containing five different hands across a fairly short span of time. On its third line is a message, written perhaps by a novice scribe to a classmate: "ælfmær pattafox þu pilt sping ælfric cild" ("Ælfmær Pattafox, you want to beat Ælfric the Younger.").<sup>41</sup> Presumably it was written in the same context as the line above: "prit þus oððer bet ride apeg" ("write like this, or, better, ride away"), though this may be an unrelated pen trial, as Scragg implies.<sup>42</sup> Stokes notes the apparently formulaic nature of the *prit þus* line and suggests that it may have been a pen trial, possibly one used to train novice scribes, and connects it with the "messy and irregular" hand of the note to Ælfmær.<sup>43</sup> Wormald sees the latter as a "scribal doodle", so would place both in the same context.<sup>44</sup> Neither hand is assured, with inclinations towards Caroline forms particularly visible in the Pattafox note's *a* forms and the instruction's *g*.

Above these comments, the first line of the verso has the concluding line from a section of Edgar's laws. The scribe was clearly seeking to finish his work on the recto as his writing becomes noticeably more compressed at about the twenty-first line; like the Nowell scribes, he does not seem to have thought

39 Online as part of the British Library's *Digitised Manuscripts* project. Gneuss and Lapidge, *Handlist*, §412; Ker, *Catalogue*, §225.

40 Stokes thinks it was probably produced at Worcester, *English Vernacular Minuscule*, p. 24.

41 The hand is §628.5 in Scragg's *Conspectus*, where he is described as a "novice copyist".

42 This is §628 in the *Conspectus*.

43 *English Vernacular Minuscule*, pp. 183–184. Stokes mistakenly says that the *prit þus* line comes after the Ælfmær addition.

44 Patrick Wormald, 'Law Books', *History of the Book*, ed. Gameson (2012), 525–536, p. 531.

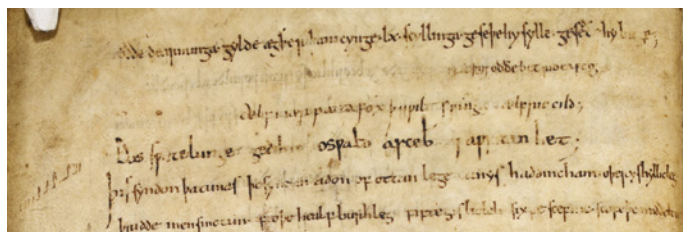


FIGURE 70 *Five hands in five lines, including Wulfstan's on line 4, on Harley 55, fol. 4v.1-6.*

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further in advance than this. He seems to have recharged his ink at this point and it may have been the pause thus provided that gave the opportunity to assess the chances of completing the text by the end of the side. The following four lines have significantly reduced word spacing, with lines 23 and 24 extending into the right hand margin. But his efforts were in vain, and the first line of the verso – probably intended originally to be a blank endleaf – had to be used. A little later than his unsuccessful endeavours, a memorandum of lost lands, S 1453, was added on lines 4 to 25. Wulfstan himself wrote the first line, and made two other additions to the text.<sup>45</sup> Further pen trials in the left hand margin of this text may be by its scribe or possibly (judging by the looped ascenders) somewhat later.

Probably, a two-line space was left between the end of 11 / III Edgar and the land note, into which two scribes later found space to scrawl; this is more likely than the archbishop making a formal record beneath some juvenile banter. The collection of legal codes was evidently important enough to be used to record a land memorandum, yet became insignificant enough to be scribbled on by junior scribes shortly thereafter; a document that had been significant enough to be edited by the archbishop found its way to a school-room.<sup>46</sup> Of particular interest to the narrative of this page is the fact that some of the lands were recovered, and are recorded as such in the York Gospels along with a survey of estates belonging to the Minster, presumably to ensure that such

45 His contributions are, first, an introductory line attributing the text to Oswald; second, an inserted phrase asserting “ic Ospald arceb putelinge [þæt]” (“I, Archbishop Oswald, make it clear that ...”); and a final judgment: “prece god spa he pille.” (“God avenge it as He wishes”). *þæt* (or, more likely particularly in the context of an addition, *þ*) has been trimmed away, but is clear from context and from a sixteenth-century record of the charter in London, BL, Harley MS 6841, where Wulfstan's additions have been integrated.

46 A similar point is made by Wormald, ‘Law Books’, p. 531. On Wulfstan's books, see most recently Andy Orchard, ‘The Library of Wulfstan of York’, *History of the Book*, ed. Gameson (2012), 694–700.

difficulties over ownership could not be repeated.<sup>47</sup> So, by 1023 at the latest, the memorandum recorded here was no longer of significance to the community at York. If the Harley record of Oswald's complaint had been drafted and edited by Wulfstan with the intention of forming part of a demand for returned land, and if the draft had been written up or performed from this copy, and deployed successfully, then perhaps Harley 55 was no longer such a significant volume. It could, then, have found its way into the schoolroom where Ælfric Pattafox and his friends (or enemies) could have learned from and defaced it. This, then, is an example of a manuscript being used in a number of different ways by different people within the same community, within a short period of time.

It is, indeed, common to find manuscripts from the late Anglo-Saxon period being utilised by very different members of a community for a wide range of purposes. These often show subtle awareness of how different texts can speak to one another, or how an older text can be updated or given new meaning: the same instinct I see at play in the Nowell Codex's combination and presentation of texts.<sup>48</sup> Such interventions also display the full range of responses to the significance of manuscripts that Appendix 4 suggests are present in the Nowell Codex, from interested annotation to careful curation to dismissive – perhaps childish – scrawling. The next section considers some examples of manuscripts being produced in the kind of communal environment I have argued for as the background to the Nowell Codex.

### Communal Production of Manuscripts

Most manuscripts in this period were produced by a combination of different hands. It is sometimes clear that scribes were allocated specific copy gatherings and they then presumably worked side by side to complete the whole project. However, there are many variations on this theme including numerous manuscripts where scribes seem to have different levels of responsibility, or where they work together on a gathering or just a few sides, or where one main scribe receives support from others who intervene in his work from time to time. The original production of Vitellius C. v seems to be one such instance

47 Recovered lands were those at Sherburn-in-Elmet, Otley and Ripon, according to the *Anglo-Saxon Charters Website*, entry for York, online at <<http://www.kemble.asnc.cam.ac.uk/node/121>>, last visited 13/6/16.

48 Compare Cooper, *Monk-Bishops*, on late Anglo-Saxon manuscript culture as dynamic, fluid, and experimental in its combinations of texts, throughout but see e.g. pp. 11, 88–89, 147, 190, 270.

where – setting aside the later interventions from Scribes D and E – Scribe A wrote the manuscript with B and C contributing a few lines each from time to time. Unlike the division of labour in Nowell, it seems likely to me that these scribal contributions are based on semantic units, though to demonstrate that requires a detailed consideration of precisely where the different hands start and end – an issue which, as noted above, requires necessarily subjective judgments to be made on who wrote what, often based on very little evidence. By my reading, the only contribution that probably starts and ends in line with manuscript rulings is on fol. 191r where Scribe B seems to start work at the beginning of line 13 and to write up to the end of the side at line 26, though the manuscript is damaged at this point and it is not possible to be certain that he writes up to the end of the final line.<sup>49</sup>

It is curious that, in a manuscript dominated by one hand, the various contributions from others should be so close together. So, for instance, fols. 191r–192v see Scribe A writing twelve lines, then handing to Scribe B for thirteen before Scribe C takes over to write 49 lines (a full 26 line side then 23 lines on fol. 192v), before Scribe A comes back again. A similar narrative holds on fol. 185, where A wrote recto lines 1–14 before C took over on line 14 to write four lines and then handing back to A. He then completed the recto in six lines, and wrote six more at the top of the verso before handing over to B who wrote seven lines before finally returning the manuscript to A.

Perhaps this close working relationship can be explained by the fact that, in keeping with many scribes of this period who were responsible for very brief stints, Scribe B is not at all confident. His longest contribution, on fol. 191r, has numerous mistakes mostly corrected by erasure with some overwriting (I count eight corrections in these thirteen lines of text), and his letter shapes are more inconsistent than his colleagues'. It is possible that he was less experienced or skilled than Scribe A, or perhaps that he simply paid less attention during these brief stints. Scribe C's forms are confident and clear – with the possible exception of round *s*, formed uncomfortably on fol. 191v.17. Given his weaknesses, Scribe B may have been learning from the others, though I see no indication that he seeks to imitate their letter-forms. All three hands are similar, having broadly square proportions, with B's the most laterally compressed. It remains entirely opaque why the scribes interacted in this way; this manuscript deserves fuller discussion. In the immediate context, however, it suffices to note the active scriptorium environment this activity implies, with scribes of different capacities coming in to assist a colleague with his

49 This conclusion is based on my readings of scribal stints which do not always align with those of others. See note 30 above.

considerable task and presumably discussing their work and contributions as they go.

The hands in Vitellius C. v are similar without being identical. More intimately, the two scribes working in Latin and Old English in Titus A. iv apparently sought to bring their hands into alignment at the point where they meet.<sup>50</sup> Closely aligned hands can also be seen in Lincoln, Cathedral Library MS 182, a copy of Bede's Homilies on the Gospels in Caroline minuscule. Indeed, the similarity of the scribes in Lincoln 182 results in differing views about how many there are, with Bishop identifying ten and Thomson only six.<sup>51</sup> Scragg also sees a number of hands that I do not in Vitellius C. v, bringing the total original contributors to seven. If the larger numbers are accepted for these manuscripts, it should be noted that this would probably require most members of their respective communities to have participated in the productions, which is entirely plausible but does place manuscript making at the centre of their communal lives.<sup>52</sup> It is also important to be aware that focusing on these relatively unusual instances starts to give a skewed impression of communal manuscript production: on the whole, visual homogeneity is more remarkable when it occurs than when it does not, and Wilcox has argued that "permissible alterations" within even a single scribe's hand are rather wider than is often assumed.<sup>53</sup> That is to say, the surprise often expressed at the contrast between

50 A.N. Doane, *ASMMF Volume 19: Saints' Lives, Martyrologies, and Bilingual "Rule of St. Benedict" in the British Library* MRTS 384 (Tempe, AZ, 2010), p. 66. I have not seen this manuscript. Cf. Conner, 'Matched Scribal Hands'.

51 T.A.M. Bishop 'Lincoln Cathedral MS 182', *Lincolnshire History and Archaeology* 2 (1967), 73–76, at p. 75; R.M. Thomson, *Catalogue of the Manuscripts of Lincoln Cathedral Chapter* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 147. See also the manuscript's description in Rolf H. Bremmer, Jr. and Kees Dekker, *ASMMF Volume 21: Saints' Lives and Homilies*, MRTS 413 (Tempe, AZ, 2013).

52 Ivor Atkins, 'The Church at Worcester from the Eighth to the Twelfth Century, Part II', *The Antiquaries Journal* 20 (1940), 1–38, estimates the *familia* at Worcester, which of course varied over time, to have had somewhere between 15 and 30 members in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, with perhaps sixteen by 1016–1017, pp. 15–16.

53 Pers. corr., 2/7/16. A number of general and specific analyses have similar findings on the probable impossibility of certainly distinguishing between multiple scribes or one inconsistent hand; see e.g. Kenneth Sisam, 'Marginalia in the Vercelli Book', *Studies*, ed. Sisam (1953), 109–118, at p. 113, quoted by Scragg in this context, *Conspectus*, p. xii; Scragg's own comments, *Conspectus*, pp. xii–xiii; Stokes, *English Vernacular Minuscule*, p. 100 & pp. 140–141 on Bodley 579, the Leofric Missal; Kwakkel on Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, Vossianus Latinus Octavo MS 92., 'Classics on Scraps', p. 109; *ASMMF* 19 on Caligula A. xiv, the Caligula Troper; *ASMMF* 17 on CUL Gg. 3. 28.



the scripts used in the Nowell Codex is not warranted on the basis of other manuscript productions of around the same period.<sup>54</sup>

By way of comparison with Nowell and the other complex productions discussed here, it is worth considering a highly-organised project to produce an important Latin text in a major scriptorium. Cambridge, University Library, MS Ff. 4. 43 is a copy of Smaragdus' *Diadema Monachorium*. It was produced in Christ Church, Canterbury in the late tenth century by a team of scribes working closely together but not seeking to align their hands. As laid out in Table 13, six scribes worked on the manuscript, mostly taking individual responsibility for gatherings, while the fourth quire was worked on by at least three of the scribes.

There are two major points of interest in this context. First, Scribe A produced the first three sides of quire 2, and then 21 lines of fol. 10v, before Scribe D took over and completed the quire. Second, the fourth quire represents a phase of intense and well managed co-operation. That Scribe D took over from Scribe A towards the end of quire 2 is unusual in a project which otherwise

TABLE 13    *Distribution of scribes in CUL Ff. 4. 43.*

Quire	Folios	Scribe
1	3–8	A
2	9–10v.21	A
	10v.22–16	D
3	17–24	B
4	25 & 32	C
	26 & 31	E
	27 & 30	B
	28 & 29	C
5	33–40	C
6	41–48	C
7	49–56	D
8	57–64	D
9	65–72	E
10	73–80	F
11	81–87	F

54    A point made frequently in discussion of the Nowell Codex and manuscript culture generally; see e.g. Orchard, *Companion*, p. 22; Gameson, ‘Scribes and Scriptoria’, p. 111.

sees each scribe taking responsibility for his own quires. It may not be a coincidence that Scribe A makes a fairly major omission on fol. 10r which has to be corrected by the addition of a line of text beneath the ruled area. But the replacement is not likely to have happened on the basis of quality: Scribe D was no master. He dealt poorly with a hole in the parchment on fol. 62r, doing a better job on the verso by simply leaving a wide margin around it. He also mislabelled § LVI as LVII and § LVIII as LVIII on fols. 56v and 58v respectively. Scribe A does not seem to have worked on the manuscript again; perhaps he was not permanently assigned to this task, or found another focus.

Quire 4 offers a clearer instance of close scribal co-operation. Sentences and even words are shared between short stints, making it unlike the additions of B and C in Vitellius C. v, and more like the sharing of text by quantity, or perhaps by exemplar layout, seen in Nowell. However, in quire 4 there is no excess spacing or cramping of the sort that would indicate a scribe knowing he had to reach a certain point. On this basis, Gameson finds it likely that the quire was copied “sequentially from a bound gathering rather than simultaneously from separate sheets”.<sup>55</sup> There are, though, signs of this kind of expansion and contraction elsewhere in the manuscript, indicative of page-by-page if not line-by-line reproduction of the exemplar in the work of scribes B, C, D, and E.<sup>56</sup>

That most of the scribes of Ff. 4. 43 were in places replicating the exemplar, along with the fact that each scribe takes responsibility for a bifolium in quire 4, makes it seem rather more likely to me that the exemplar was in fact disbound at least for the production of this shared gathering, with each scribe given a bifolium to replicate. This would have been a significant undertaking, and would presumably only have happened if the scriptorium was in a major rush to complete the production. There are some minor pieces of evidence to support this scenario. The last line on fol. 27v, as Scribe B comes to the end of his first folio, is more heavily abbreviated than usual, which may indicate the scribe ensuring that he could fit in all he needed to in order to match up with Scribe A's fol. 28r. Further, while words and sentences are often split between the scribes, there are frequent errors in the process as at the last lines of fols. 29v and 31v, or the superfluous uncorrected *a* at the start of fol. 31r. These errors may simply be coincidence – the work of all the scribes is prone to numerous slips throughout – but they could indicate difficulties and tensions as they

55 Gameson, ‘Scribes and Scriptoria’, p. 109.

56 B is very certain about when he wants to end fol. 23v; C leaves gaps at the end of lines throughout quire 6; E does the same on fol. 65r and to a lesser degree throughout quire 9; D is anxious about line endings on fol. 64r as he prepares to hand over to E.

attempt to squeeze or expand in order to reproduce their exemplar precisely. Gameson's (still perfectly plausible) reading finds a communal performance of unity: an exemplar and copy text passed around the group of scribes, who each took a turn before passing it on, rather like my proposal for Vitellius C. v but more sustained and regular. My reading finds a less extreme instance of sharing but is still a model of intimate work. It is worth noting that Gullick's estimate of scribal writing speed suggests that "200 lines per day is a good working figure", so each scribe's contribution to this gathering is probably less than a single day's work.<sup>57</sup> We could, then, imagine the collective endeavour on quire 4 taking place on one intense day in late tenth-century Christ Church, Canterbury; however it was produced, strong oversight and communication were clearly necessary.

The use of capitals in this fourth gathering is also of some interest. In the other quires, the scribes are responsible for their own capitals. They never become spectacular, are semi-marginal, usually three or four lines high, and sometimes given slight decoration such as spirals at termini. There is a general intention to vary colour, with most scribes alternating between two colours such as green and red or red and black. They have clearly distinct styles and vary somewhat in ambition and skill.<sup>58</sup> What is significant in this context is that at least some of the capitals in quire 4 were apparently written by Scribe B during other scribes' stints.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, the *A* on fol. 25r is almost a direct copy of his *A* on fol. 22r. None of these five looks at all like the capitals produced by Scribes C and E from their respective quires. Thus it seems likely that Scribe B was given the responsibility of producing capitals for the fourth quire. This enhances the impression of this fourth quire as an impressive instance of a collective effort.<sup>60</sup>

57 'How Fast Did Scribes Write?', p. 240.

58 A alternates his small and simple capitals between red and black; B's more elegant forms alternate between red and green; C uses smaller capitals at just two lines high; D is more ambitious and floreate ranging from attractive (e.g. D on fol. 62r) to clumsy (e.g. I on fol. 52v); E uses a wider range of colours, including green (fol. 66v), blue (fol. 67v), orange (fol. 68v), and red (fol. 69r) and has clean shapes with delicate spirals at termini; F is probably the most skilful, alternating between orange and red with some black and deploying plain but striking forms (see for instance orange and black *B*'s that face one another on fols. 79v and 80r, the black *A* on fol. 84r, and red *M* with floreate decoration on fol. 78r).

59 Certainly those on fols. 25r, 28v, 29v, and 31r.

60 Contrast the uncoordinated decision making about placement and form of capitals in Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica, Reg. lat. MS 1671, produced at Worcester by four scribes around 1000, discussed by Gameson in 'Book Production at Worcester', pp. 205–210. I have not seen this manuscript.

Ff. 4. 43 thus gives an instance of the kind of organisation and management possible at a large house when working on a fairly significant project. Each scribe knows precisely what he has to do, and does it to the best of his ability. When some pressing need required a collective act of production, it was managed with great efficiency by giving each scribe a separate bifolium to work on, presumably simultaneously, with the most talented initialler assigned to decorate the gathering thereby produced. But even here there is a general lack of visual homogeneity – clearly not a criterion by which joint scribal performances were normally assessed – and numerous simple errors are made. It can readily be compared with the “fine and decidedly ambitious production” Lincoln 182, which was nonetheless not effectively realised by its scribal team, probably indicative of a lack of the re-planning necessary to convert a Continental exemplar into an insular format.<sup>61</sup> Ambitious and communal projects are, then, prone to errors and challenges in execution, particularly when significant adaptation or rethinking is required. This is the context in which the Nowell Codex’s persistent mistake-making should be read.

The copy of the *Old English Martyrology* in Julius A. x is another instance of communal copying, which, like Vitellius C. v, deserves more attention than it has recently received.<sup>62</sup> The text was copied by four scribes.<sup>63</sup> The first and main scribe has a much younger looking hand than the three that follow, some of which are almost archaic by comparison. In the context of the immediate discussion, though, it is the nature of their sharing which is of interest. Scribe A wrote fols. 44–129, eleven full gatherings. Scribes B and C shared the three gatherings of fols. 130–156r in a complex pattern. Scribe D took over on fol. 156r.12 and wrote through to the end at fol. 175v. In this highly structured text, it is striking that none of the handovers takes place at the end of sections. Only two occur at the end of sides, only one of which is at the end of a verso when Scribe A ends and B begins. In the delicate dance between Scribes B and C, three handovers occur in the middle of manuscript lines, and three of those

61 Bishop, ‘Lincoln 182’, pp. 74–75; quotation from p. 74. I have not seen this manuscript.

62 The fullest discussion is still Günther Kotzor’s in *Das altenglische Martyrologium*, 2 vols., Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften Philosophisch-Historische Klasse 88 (München, 1981), vol. 1 pp. 56–73, with plates of fols. 44v, 131v, 135r, and 170v. Roberts discusses Scribe A’s hand, with a plate of fol. 88r, in *Guide to Scripts*, §14, pp. 72–73. The manuscript is discussed by A.N. Doane in *ASMMF* 19, and by Stokes, *English Vernacular Minuscule*, pp. 111–112. Stokes and Brookes include fols. 72r, 145r, and 159r with annotations in *DigiPal*. It is Gneuss and Lapidge, *Handlist*, §338 and Ker, *Catalogue*, §161. I have not seen this manuscript; my discussion is based on the images and analyses noted here, especially Kotzor’s excellent textual notes, and the microfiche images in *ASMMF*.

63 Scragg, *Conspectus*, §494–§497.

are in the middle of words.<sup>64</sup> These exchanges must have occurred in close collaboration, as each scribe writes on a recto before handing over to the other to write the verso. The length of copying stint seems broadly based on the number of sides each scribe copies. At 9 sides or 153 lines for B, and 8 sides or 136 lines for C, this is below Gullick's estimate of 200 lines as a good day's work, but this is perhaps to be expected from people who are not masters of their art. From this point on, however, stints become shorter and handovers less clean with words and manuscript lines shared on recto and verso of fol. 145 and on fol. 153v. It is striking that when C hands over to Scribe D, he does so at the end of a manuscript line (fol. 156r.11). Scribes B and C, then, worked unusually closely, and handovers between them are related to neither the text (as in Vitellius C. v) nor to the physical layout of text (as in Nowell and CUL Ff. 4. 43). This may indicate haste in production, though an extreme need to produce as swiftly as possible would be more likely to see the four scribes producing their own separate gatherings or sheets.<sup>65</sup>

The four hands are quite different. As noted above and in Chapter 2, Scribe A's hand is radically different from the others: using bold, large, forward-leaning and Caroline influenced, eleventh-century looking, script. B, C, and D all write a minuscule influenced by Square forms but with obvious internal differences. B's hand is compressed and heavy with short wide letter-forms, C's rather wider and taller, and D's much more cramped than B or C, with frequent use of serifs and horns giving it a jagged appearance. What kind of scriptorium would have these four scribes working together, and what could their relative roles have been? The usual chronology of scripts would make Scribe A the youngest, yet he writes by far the most text and seems to approach his work with the most confidence. Based primarily on Scribe A's hand, but also on the mixture of different scripts which seems to occur most often there, Stokes cautiously associates the manuscript with Worcester.<sup>66</sup> Rauer has observed that Scribe A "distinguishes himself with a number of phonological features which could be interpreted as south-eastern, including *æ* before nasal".<sup>67</sup> It is, then, possible that Scribe A had been trained elsewhere and came into the community at

64 B copies from the start of fol. 130r to the end of fol. 134r, then C copies from the start of fol. 134v to the last line on fol. 138r. B resumes at the top of fol. 138v.

65 Joana Proud argues for scribal interventions of almost any kind as indicative of haste, in 'The Cotton-Corpus Legendary into the Twelfth Century: Notes on Salisbury Cathedral MSS 221 and 222', *Early Medieval Texts and Interpretations*, eds. Treharne and Rosser (2002), 341–352 at pp. 346–347.

66 Stokes, *English Vernacular Minuscule*, p. 111, though he also includes it among his "unlocalised manuscripts" at p. 152

67 Based on correspondence with Robert Getz, Rauer, *Old English Martyrology*, n. 84 p. 20.

Worcester.<sup>68</sup> He may here be working with a group of scribes who, although using an older script, are in fact younger or at least less able or experienced. Certainly, the interaction between Scribes B and C can be interpreted as two inexperienced scribes sharing an assigned task. If they can be regarded, on this reading of internal evidence, as having relatively recently learned their hands, it is remarkable indeed that they write in Square minuscule. Who was teaching them to write this way towards the end of the tenth century and why do we not see them attempting to learn from Scribe A? These questions cannot currently be answered; the key point here is that the relatively significant task of copying a martyrology seems to have been shared among a team with different approaches and levels of skill, with at least one pair having a close working relationship. In the context of Nowell Scribe A's apparent struggles with Latin, it may be worth noting that a community or household which needed a martyrology in Old English seems also to have lacked highly trained scribes. This speculation aside, it is clear that significant aesthetic imbalance is not necessarily indicative of a low status project. It is also evident that individuals with widely varying levels of skill, and perhaps of different ages, could have worked together on Julius A. x as I have suggested they did on the Nowell Codex.<sup>69</sup> And it is also clear that simply being older (or, more precisely, using an older script) does not make a scribe in control of a project or among its more confident executors.

The homiletic collection in Julius E. vii stands in contrast to Nowell and Julius A. x as a relatively rare example of a communal vernacular project with a high degree of visual homogeneity.<sup>70</sup> One scribe produced most of the text with support from at least two, and perhaps three, other hands. Scribe A wrote up to fol. 107v, apart from brief interventions by another hand (Scribe D).<sup>71</sup> Scribe

68 Although it is near impossible to argue clearly for distinct house styles in this period, especially at Worcester; see e.g. Gameson, 'Book Production at Worcester', p. 228; Julia Crick, 'The Art of Writing: Scripts and Scribal Production', *The Cambridge History of Early Medieval English Literature*, ed. Clare A. Lees (Cambridge, 2012), 50–72, at pp. 70–71; Stokes, *English Vernacular Minuscule*, at e.g. p. 105; cf. Noel, *Harley Psalter*, p. 148 on the similar problem of artistic house style.

69 Cf. Gameson's discussion of successive generations of scribes working together at Christ Church Canterbury, detectable in increased homogeneity and a style of their own, contrasted with Worcester's more persistent variation into the mid-eleventh century, 'Book Production at Worcester', pp. 227–228.

70 Available online as part of the British Library's *Digitised Manuscripts* project. It is Gneuss and Lapidge, *Handlist*, §339 and Ker, *Catalogue*, §162. On matched hands see Conner, 'Matched Scribal Hands'.

71 These are at fol. 45v.13–16 and (less certainly) fol. 88r.14–17.

B then took over in order to start the 'Seven Sleepers'. Either a third hand – Scribe C – then took over around fol. 116v to complete the 'Seven Sleepers' and then write 'Mary of Egypt', or Scribe A resumed his work.<sup>72</sup> In either reading, Scribe A certainly continues after 'Mary of Egypt' and writes the rest of the manuscript. As Needham showed, the inclusion of 'Mary of Egypt' was a relatively late decision in this project and the varied scribal activity is likely to have been part of an effort to integrate it effectively.<sup>73</sup> The key point here is that the scribes have very closely matched hands and even Scribe E, the later 'editor', seems to have sought to integrate his alterations. It is hard to know what occasioned this level of effort in this particular manuscript. Possibly, given the deliberate and conscious adaptation of Ælfric's work which it contains, this is a concerted effort to produce an authoritative volume; given the editorial work it underwent, and the probability of further interventions over the course of the eleventh century, it seems likely that it was successful. It is worth noting that these closely matched hands were all responsible for fairly considerable portions of the text, unlike brief contributions by many of the uncertain or less finely integrated hands noted above.

More similar to the complex sharing by uncertain scribes in Julius A. x is Trinity R.5.22 (717) (Part 3), fols. 72–158.<sup>74</sup> This copy of the Alfredian *Regula pastoralis* is supplemented by a small selection from Juvenal's *Satires*, II 48–49 and was produced around the same time as the Nowell Codex.<sup>75</sup> It probably came to Matthew Parker from Sherborne, though Stokes notes the similarity of the first hand to that of the Durham *Liber Vitae*.<sup>76</sup> Stokes also tentatively connects it with Nowell, observing that both combine English Vernacular minuscule with Square minuscule, and that in both, as indeed in Julius A. x, the 'newer' hand comes first. He follows the traditional reading of Nowell for both manuscripts: that this implies an older scribe using the script he knew and a younger scribe having been taught the new script. Setting this speculation aside, he observes that the combination of different hands could

72 I follow Scragg in thinking it most likely to be a third hand; Stokes follows Ker in seeing Scribe A resuming. The (probable) three hands are Scragg, *Conspectus*, §498, §499, and §499a – the latter indicating the uncertainty over my 'Scribe C'. Stokes discusses the manuscript pp. 143–144 and gives his scribal attributions p. 221.

73 Needham, 'Julius E. vii'.

74 Ker, *Catalogue* §87; Gneuss and Lapidge, *Handlist* §180. The manuscript can be viewed online at <<http://trin-sites-pub.trin.cam.ac.uk/james/viewpage.php?index=1529>>, last visited 16/6/16.

75 Ker, followed by Gneuss and Lapidge, dates it s. x / xi; Stokes, *English Vernacular Minuscule*, p. 94, places it firmly in the eleventh century, but "within hailing distance of the year 1000"; Sisam regarded it as "rather later in the eleventh century" in 'Alfred's *Pastoral Care*'.

76 Stokes, *English Vernacular Minuscule*, n. 67 p. 94.

imply production at “smaller and more provincial scriptoria”, though he also notes the multiplicity of hands in several manuscripts from Worcester in this period.<sup>77</sup> This trend of more recent scripts opening manuscripts may perhaps reflect an interest in making the first side of a manuscript as impressive as possible, though this was clearly not a universal approach and if my reading of Nowell is correct, Scribe B originally opened that manuscript.<sup>78</sup>

I see four hands in Trinity R.5.22, though some scholars identify three.<sup>79</sup> If they are different hands, Scribes A and B are very similar in form; the difference could be purely the result of a finer nib. However, it is also clear that Scribe B does not elongate descenders to anything like the degree of Scribe A on the final line of each page. If it is the same person, he has changed his ideas about presentation quite firmly between his change of pens and I think it safe to regard them as two. On the other hand, my Scribe A does not seem entirely certain of his approach: from fol. 79v (the start of §10) to fol. 85r (the start of §16) he makes heavy use of accent marks, tailing off on fol. 85v and with far fewer thereafter. I cannot see any connection between this usage and the text, and although it seems to begin at the start of a section, the impulse ebbs away about a quarter of the way through another. Stokes’ impression of scribes who may have been “newly trained”, and who were therefore presumably a little uncertain, seems fair.<sup>80</sup>

77 Stokes, *English Vernacular Minuscule*, p. 94, with Worcester manuscripts discussed pp. 97–112.

78 Cf. T.A. Heslop, ‘Art and the Man’, esp. pp. 295–297 on the York Gospels where the more modern hands may have been given the more visible pages; Pearsall suggests that this kind of decision is made in the same manner as “a greengrocer might put his freshest fruit at the front of the stall”, ‘Auchinleck Manuscript’, p. 15.

79 Scragg sees four (his §217–§220), as does Stokes, according to *DigiPal*. Ker, Carolin Schreiber, and Michael Wright and Stephanie Hollis all see three: Schreiber, *King Alfred’s Old English Translation of Pope Gregory the Great’s ‘Regula pastoralis’ and its Cultural Context: A Study and Partial Edition According to All Surviving Manuscripts Based on Cambridge, CCC 12, Münster Universitätschriften 25* (Frankfurt am Main, 2003), pp. 58–59; Wright and Hollis, *ASMMF Volume 12: Manuscripts of Trinity College, Cambridge*, MRTS 274 (Tempe, AZ, 2004), §81, at pp. 15–24. The hands as I see them are: Scribe A 72v–94v.20; Scribe B 94v.21–110v.15; Scribe C 110v.15–115v; Scribe D 116r–158v. Scragg has Scribe A ending at the foot of fol. 94r but I cannot clearly identify the takeover until the start of the new section. Stokes and Brookes have Scribe A continuing on fol. 94v but without specifying a final line.

80 Stokes, *English Vernacular Minuscule*, p. 94. Compare O’Brien O’Keeffe’s suggestion that variations in punctuation of the Metrical Preface indicate “individual reading”, *Visible Song*, p. 95. She does not comment on the prose parts of the text.



The only certain mid-section handover is that between Scribes C and D in §37 of the text. There are no indications of scribal concern at all: Scribe C writes to the end of fol. 115v, starts a sentence with “Ðæt lead”, and Scribe D continues it when he takes over at the top of fol. 116r with “is þonn hefigre · þoñ ænig oðer andpeorc” (“Lead is heavier than any other substance”). I have not found any indication that any of the scribes worked to compress or expand their hand as they approached the end of a gathering. Instead, I find it likely that Scribes B and C took over from their respective predecessors in the middle of a manuscript side, but at the start of a new section. Taken with some indications that Scribe D looked back over Scribe C’s work, this makes it likely that the scribes worked sequentially rather than at the same time and that – with the exception of the break between Scribes C and D – they were allotted text on the basis of textual rather than manuscript divisions.

Curiously, on fol. 114v, the lengthy title to §37 is followed by a line of linked red *x*’s as a decorative motif, shown in Figure 71. It is not particularly well executed: moving up and down and changing aspect as the line progresses. It ends in the same punctuation mark as the chapter title immediately above. I take these as indications of an improvised space-filling device which may have seemed like a good idea when the first four or five figures were drawn, but which swiftly became wearying. This must indicate that the first line of the section had been written before the rubricating ink was brought in and, because the *x*’s are inset to take account of its presence, the large and decorative *O* was already there, too. By contrast, the initial letter for §11 is missing on fol. 80r, where both chapter heading and text are in the hand of Scribe A; the same process was not, then, being followed by Scribes A and C. The heading on fol. 114v, like that on fol. 112v, was written by Scribe D for Scribe C’s text. As Scribe C otherwise writes all of his own chapter headings, and as all other scribes write their own headings throughout, we can conclude that he forgot to fill these in and that Scribe D stepped in to fill the gap. That Scribe D did not do the same for Scribe A’s missing initial shows that he was not reading through the entire codex: he is not a supervisor making a quality assurance check, just a colleague who noticed an omission. It is likely that he took up the text after Scribe C had concluded his section – however this was handed over – so would naturally be able to glance back through what had been done. That Scribe C completed his own red ink work everywhere apart from here indicates that he did not complete all of his text and then go back through to decorate. Rather, we can surmise that he wrote some text and then went back to fill the headings in, perhaps in different daily stints. Perhaps these last two sections with headings omitted were his last day’s work on this manuscript. At 32 lines of text to a side, for at least 9 sides (fols. 112v–115v), this gives him 288 lines of text to produce in a day: a demanding but

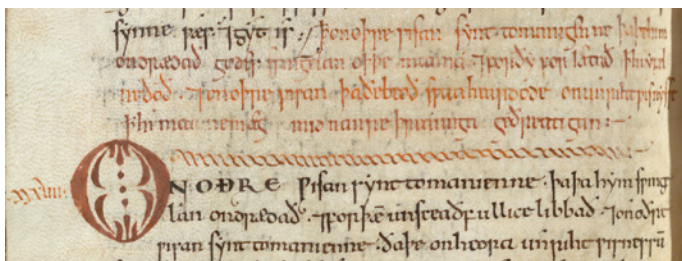


FIGURE 71 *An improvised decoration to fill space in Trinity R.5.22, fol. 14v.13–20. See also colour plate 13.*

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feasible rate.<sup>81</sup> It is interesting that Scribe C was not called back to complete his work. Scribe D is clearly the most skilled at producing decorated capitals and we can perhaps assume that he was happy to take responsibility for doing so.<sup>82</sup> Or possibly, and more speculatively, given that Scribe C is the only scribe in this manuscript to hand over at the end of a manuscript side rather than at the end of a section, he had moved away from the scriptorium to another responsibility once his time on this manuscript had ended.

The degree to which Scribe D decorates his initials varies considerably, opening with a spectacular *O* on fol. 116r but thereafter generally using more modest forms with the occasional exuberance. His letters become more consistently elaborate towards the end of his work. I cannot see any textual reason for these variations: presumably, the scribe was at liberty to do as he chose and perhaps (like Nowell Scribe A when working on *Alexander*) felt more inclined to spectacle as he saw the end of his work drawing near. The final and most decorative phase commences with a highly decorated form on fol. 153v, the

81 The scribe of München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, clm 14437 produced an average 310 lines per day; see ‘How Fast Did Scribes Write?’, pp. 234–235; cf. pp. 238 & 240 which estimate 200 lines per day as a “good working figure” with the possibility of wide variation.

82 In addition to these two, his other decorated initials are at fols. 124v, 133r, 135r, 136r, 149r, 150v, 153v, 155r, 156r, 155v and 156v (these last out of order due to misaligned folios). They are all in red or orange, with green only used on fol. 116r. Schreiber also notes that he wrote the chapter headings at fols. 112v and 114v, and that Scribe D (her Hand 3) produces the most elaborate capitals. I do not entirely agree with Schreiber’s assertion that he produces the only elaborate initials (*‘Regula pastoralis’*, p. 58), given that her Hand 1 at least gestures towards elaboration on fols. 85v and 90v (my Scribe A) and fols. 98r and 104v (my Scribe B). Scribe D is, though, the only hand to attempt to elaborate *O* which is both by far the most frequent initial letter and, lacking termini, requires more than just flourishes to decorate.

orange ink of which is used to stain the letters of the first word (which he also does on fol. 155r). The flourishes are so extreme that they cross text in the preceding section, as they also do on fols. 155v and 156r. The text thereby obscured on fol. 155v appears to have been deemed to require clarification, as shown in Figure 72. It is the end of §61 of the text, reading “ge eac þa met | trūnysse aflemað”. The flourished *O* beneath obscures the *n* and to some degree the abbreviation mark (like an umlaut in this scribe’s hand) over *u*. As far as I can tell, it is the same scribe who has inserted *t* to the right and slightly above, with the answering figure in the left margin now lost to marginal trimming, though the end of the cross is still visible. It is accompanied by *trūnys*: not the whole word, just the part potentially obscured. Subsequent initials, on fols. 155ar and 156v, are decorated in the same flourished style, but with no intrusion into the text space. I can see no signs of such correction in the other sites, even though the *o* of *eal* | *dormen* is obscured on fol. 153v. The scribe’s own interest in decoration seems, then, to have been in tension with his primary task. There is no reason to surmise an overseer: just a scribe who got a little carried away and then exerted more self-control.

As in the Nowell Codex, capitalisation and decoration seem indicative of scribal attitude but also tell us about the ways in which scribes interacted and shared their work. Like Ff. 4. 43, and perhaps unlike the Nowell Codex, the degree of decoration required for initials, and their basic design, seems entirely up to scribal whim. Scribe D’s brief glance back at Scribe C’s work can perhaps be compared with Nowell Scribe B’s corrections to his colleague’s work on *Beowulf*. Although this required much closer and more extensive reading than



FIGURE 72 Text obscured by an overly decorative initial and clarified in the margin in Trinity R.5.22, fol. 155v.23–28.

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D's activity in Trinity R.5.22, the basic culture of supporting one another in readily identifiable areas of need, without going further to correct everything, is entirely consistent.

These brief discussions of Julius A. x, Julius E. vii, Trinity R.5.22, and CUL Ff. 4. 43 do not establish clear patterns of manuscript production across the country or period. Still less should the case studies offered here be regarded as definitive examples of what was happening in particular scriptoria at particular times. What they do, I hope, demonstrate is that the principle of a collective effort to produce a manuscript was fairly common in the period for texts in both Old English and Latin, for both elaborate and more modest projects, and at major centres as well as places with fewer resources. Aesthetic imbalance between scribes is not always present, but is more often than not. Scribes can often be seen seeking to engage with or imitate aspects of their exemplar, and even more frequently are anxious to present their work appropriately, particularly where they meet another scribe's stint. Errors are frequent and can be corrected by the scribe who makes them, by another scribe, or by a third party. There is no set pattern for communal activity. Responsibilities were shared out and discharged in different ways for different projects, and with differing levels of allocation to each individual. This seems to have very little to do with an individual's level of expertise, though such a view might be developed further by more sustained engagement with these and other manuscripts. Continuing an attempt to explore the issues raised in my discussion of the Nowell Codex, the next section refers back to these manuscripts and explores some others in an effort to consider indications of the management of this kind of communal activity. Who was in charge, and how can we tell?

### **'Supervisors', 'Directors', and 'Compilers'**

The general assumption of scholars looking at the Nowell Codex has been to see a newer hand in combination with an older one and assume that the older supervised the younger. However, as I have argued throughout, there are clear signs that more minds than just these two were involved in the making of the Nowell Codex. And while there is good reason to believe that Scribe B was older and more experienced, there are numerous indications that he was far from absolutely in control of the project or even particularly assured during his own contributions to it. In the manuscripts discussed above, age and seniority are far from synonymous: Julius A. x is an obvious instance of a younger scribe apparently more in control of a manuscript than the 'older' hands who follow him. The final section of this chapter, and of this volume, thus looks briefly

at some examples of productions where it is likely that one figure connected with the manuscript was in charge of it in some way. Levels of authority – and precisely what these authoritative figures sought to do with their projects – are not at all easy to identify, hence the three nouns that head this section.

The kind of supervision or training that I have suggested taking place between the Nowell draughtsmen can be seen in a number of manuscripts. The best example is Jolly's late tenth-century instance, in Durham A.IV.19, of Aldred teaching Scribe B about letter-forms.<sup>83</sup> Here Aldred, the teacher, writes the majority of the text, with Scribe B coming in to write rather less and doing so with evident indications of uncertainty. I use this model below to suggest some other places where hands come in for short, and uncertain, stints as possible evidence of supervision of novice scribes. Supervision, and provision of opportunities for scribes to practise their craft, do not go hand in hand with minor projects. Scribal supervisors do not have to be the same as project directors or those who commissioned compilations. Each manuscript deserves closer individual attention than the somewhat superficial survey undertaken here, but some general observations about the identification and role of 'senior' scribes in the production of manuscripts can be drawn.

Junius 85 + 86 gives us an almost certain case of a collective project led by one of the scribal hands.<sup>84</sup> What is most significant here is that Wilcox and Healey both see Scribe A as "taking on an editorial and organizing role". Wilcox's key point is that he makes corrections and adapts the work of Scribe B, moving a few words from the ends of lines to their start to enable the binding together of the quires.<sup>85</sup> Healey's evidence is that he erased and rewrote the last two and a half lines of fol. 2v, continuing the new writing "across the bottom of the opposite leaf" because "[i]t suited his purpose to have the texts read side by side, and he attempted to form a thematic connection between them",

83 Jolly, *Community of St Cuthbert*, pp. 155–158.

84 The MS is Gneuss and Lapidge, *Handlist*, §642. There may be two or three hands, or rather more. Ker saw two, *Catalogue*, §336; Antonette diPaolo Healey agrees but sees a third freshening up and notes the possibility of others, *The Old English 'Vision of St. Paul'*, *Speculum Anniversary Monographs* 2 (Cambridge, MA, 1978), p. 8; Scragg sees three but without certainty, *Conspectus*, §930, 930a, and 930b; John Chadbon sees two main hands with a third in the middle, 'Oxford, Bodleian Library, MSS Junius 85 and 86: An Edition of a Witness to the Old English Homiletic Tradition' (unpubl. PhD dissertation, University of Leeds, 1993), referred to by Wilcox, *ASMMF* 17, p. 118; Wilcox inclines without certainty to rather more, *ASMMF* 17, p. 118; see also his comments on the difficulty of identification in 'Junius 85 and 86', n. 44 p. 356. I have not seen this manuscript apart from in the microfiche images in *ASMMF*, which are too low quality to reach any certainty on this point.

85 *ASMMF* 17, p. 118.

subsequently supplementing the version of the *Visio Pauli* thus created once he found a better version to work from.<sup>86</sup> Healey proposes that we see here the “formative stages” of an unfinished anthology; Wilcox that we see a working volume being continuously adapted. Either way, we have a scribe who took the work of others and effectively edited it to form the kind of manuscript he wanted to have. The difference with the later interpolator in Vitellius C. v is that the Junius 85 and 86 editor was contemporary with those whose work he adapted and absorbed. From a user who edits an existing text, he becomes some form of active compiler, possibly commissioning the production of a volume and – based on Healey’s suggestion that he made further changes once a fuller version of the *Visio Pauli* came into his hands – seeking out texts to be used in his work.<sup>87</sup> Such activity is not always so clear.

Scheide 71, the Blickling Homilies manuscript, has often been connected with the Nowell Codex in part thanks to textual associations, but also because it was produced by two hands writing scripts of different dates with the second scribe apparently managing the work, though in this case the newer seems to follow the older.<sup>88</sup> As is hopefully clear from the discussion above, this kind of scribal combination is not as unusual as is sometimes assumed, and in itself does not seem a particularly compelling connection between the manuscripts. The differences between the scribes’ hands are also not as stark as in the Nowell Codex, or indeed in Julius A. x: as Stokes notes in the manuscript’s entry in *DigiPal*, Scheide 71 Scribe B’s use of “large wedges which tend towards rounded blobs” on ascenders and descenders makes the initial aspect of their pages appear rather more distinct than their hands in fact are. Scribe A’s hand is rather squat and irregular, varying between upright and left-leaning, and also between round letters and narrower forms, which I cannot connect with any anxiety about space.<sup>89</sup> The radically different aspect of fol. 99v.1–5 looks almost like a different scribe altogether, but the letter-forms are fundamentally the same. His colleague has a more rounded, forward-leaning hand. However, as discussed above, aesthetic inconsistency between hands is not particularly

86 *Visio Pauli*, pp. 5–6; quotations from p. 5.

87 Cf. Cooper’s arguments for Tiberius A. iii as carefully compiled, though without making a connection to an individual hand in the manuscript, *Monk-Bishops*, e.g. p. 12.

88 The manuscript can be viewed online at the Princeton University Digital Library <<http://publ.princeton.edu/objects/x346d4176>>, last visited 24/6/16. It is Gneuss and Lapidge, *Handlist*, §905, and Ker, *Catalogue*, §382. Microfiche images and a full discussion are in Wilcox, *ASMMF* 17, as §439.

89 See e.g. at fol. 89v.17 or 92v.1–9, and cf. Wilcox, *ASMMF* 17, p. 131, who also notes irregularities of compression and expansion in the hand.

unusual and the distinction between the Scheide 71 scribes has perhaps been exaggerated by discussing it solely alongside the Nowell Codex.

Unlike in Nowell, the major capitals which open each text were produced after the text was written, as is shown by their careful shaping to avoid text on fols. 50r and 80v, and indeed by the crossing of text on fol. 70v. The scribes' awareness of the need to leave room for capitals is shown particularly clearly on fol. 98v, where the space was not fully utilised. This was not just a case of indenting the first line, but also of indenting the second by rather less: there was a clear plan for this presentational feature. Capitals were probably mostly written by one hand, as the same *M* form recurs in both scribes' work, though a different, much less ambitious, and more poorly executed shape on fol. 65r was probably not by the same hand as the others. As in Nowell, minor capitals were written by the scribes, and each has his own pattern for deploying them. Scribe B uses plain but enlarged letters and places them in the left hand margin when he can.<sup>90</sup> Scribe A uses far fewer and does not usually place them in the margin. He does, on occasion, find reason to include a marginal minor capital with some decoration.<sup>91</sup> As in Nowell, this aspect of their work was clearly not regulated as tightly as that on major capitals.

The interaction between the scribes is extremely interesting. Scribe A wrote fols. 1–49, and Scribe B fols. 120–139, but in between they alternate.<sup>92</sup> With one exception, there is no evidence of concern about spacing as either scribe approaches work done by the other, so they very probably worked together, handing the manuscript between them as did Scribes B and C in Julius A. x but in a far less regular pattern, implying a hierarchical rather than collegiate relationship. Wilcox represents their sharing as firmly managed by Scribe B, whom he sees “providing the beginning or ending of some homilies, apparently as a controlling guide”.<sup>93</sup> It is evident that Scribe A sought to fit his text to the space available. Unlike Nowell Codex Scribe B at the ends of *Beowulf* and *Judith*, but perhaps a little like Nowell Scribe A at the end of *Wonders*, he has far too much

90 See e.g. fol. 139r for three instances.

91 At e.g. fols. 88v.6 and 97r.20.

92 Scribe B writes fols. 50r.2–3, 65r.5–21, 67r.1–21, 84r.1–84v.6, 86r.1–21, 86v.2–21, 103v.16–104r.21, 109r.6–15 (the first line of fol. 9 has been mostly trimmed away, so it looks as though his hand starts on line 5, but it was originally the sixth). Rudolph Willard, ed., *The Blickling Homilies: The John H. Scheide Library, Titusville, Pennsylvania*, EEMF 10 (Copenhagen, 1960), followed by Scragg, sees Scribe A writing 67r.1–6 with B starting on 67r.7. I see Scribe B's hand from the top of this side, particularly evident in his (relatively) high *þ* and round un-horned *e* on line 1.

93 Wilcox, *ASMMF* 17, p. 133.

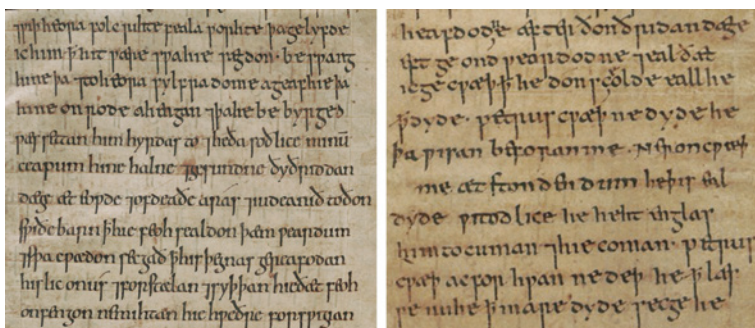


FIGURE 73 *The three scribes of the Blickling Homilies: Scheide 71 fol. 109r.2–12, showing Scribe A lines 1–5 and Scribe B lines 6–12; and fol. 110v.10–18, showing Scribe A lines 10–12 and 15–16 with Scribe C lines 13–15.*

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space and deploys exaggerated spacing before a bizarre final few lines (lines 17–20; he does not write on line 21) on fol. 119v with massive gaps between words, as shown in Figure 44. Even here, though, he shows his lack of experience, with unnecessary violation of the right hand margin on lines 1, 16, 17, and 18 of this final side when he is otherwise desperately trying to use up space. In the extremely exaggerated descenders on the final lines of fol. 118r and v one can sense his delight at approaching the end of his stint. There is nothing like this concern at the end of B's work as we now have it, though as a quire is missing at the end it is not a fair comparison.

The final interruption to Scribe A's work occurs from the start of fol. 110v.13, with a different hand writing up to *witodlice* on line 15 before handing back. This has been traditionally regarded as Scribe B's work, but I struggle to see it as his and regard it as a third hand. Figure 73 places these lines alongside fol. 109r, certainly written by Scribe B. My Scribe C hand is extremely scratchy and low and has no forward lean, so the aspect is rather unlike B's. But, as opposed to Scribe A's shift of aspect at the start of fol. 99v, the hand here uses entirely different letter-forms, deploying horned *e*, dotted *y* and low *æ*. His approach strokes give ascenders to *b* and *h* flicks to the right, compared with the wedges deployed by Scribe B. Nor is it likely to be Scribe A having one of his inconsistent moments: this scribe's two instances of *p* are topped with a serif and a split ascender respectively, his *c* is much more angular, his ascender for *d* is concave-down and extended, and his descenders not exaggerated. The spacing is also clearly uncertain, with an unnecessarily indented first line. This is the last side of a gathering and it is possible, as suggested by Wilcox, that it may be a restoration, working somewhat later than the original production to replace text that had been damaged and doing so slightly less clumsily than restorers



in Nowell and Vitellius C. v as illustrated in Figures 57–58 and 69 respectively.<sup>94</sup> The uneasiness of the letter-forms fits this interpretation, but I see no indications of underlying text and it seems more likely to me that this is original text rather than overwriting. I think there must be a third scribe scratching his way through two and a half lines of text before handing back.

As is clear from Vitellius C. v, such a brief intervention in the production of a manuscript is not exceptional. Another example is London, BL, Royal 7 C xii, fols. 4–218, a joint undertaking by two scribes with five lines written by a third on fol. 197v. However, in Scheide 71, given the weakness of the hand, it must be a novice, or conceivably someone unused to scribal work. The uncertain and inconsistent shapes for *a* and *æ* would support this reading, as perhaps would the inset start to line 14. He may be seeking to imitate Scribe A's forms – the aspect is not dissimilar – but there are numerous differences in letter formation. If the manuscript was written around the turn from the tenth to the eleventh century, it is particularly interesting that this scribe – apparently learning his craft – retains so much of the aspect and approach of Square minuscule.

Scheide 71 thus appears to show us a manuscript which was shared between scribes with quite different approaches and abilities. Given Scribe A's attempts to use up space, Scribe B must have started his copying from what is now fol. 120r before Scribe A wrote fol. 119v, so it is reasonable to assume that they worked concurrently for at least some of the time. Possibly the joint quires were written first followed by individual work, but it is not possible to ascertain this. Even accounting for missing quires, Scribe B had rather less to do than Scribe A and seems to have supported him by stepping in at odd moments to help out, usually working to the end of a side before handing back. This is similar to Wulfstan's activity, such as in Harley 55, where he sometimes provides the start of a text for a scribe to complete, clearly in a supervisory capacity. Some degree of scribal inconsistency is not at all unusual, but Scheide 71 Scribe A's is a fairly extreme example and this could indicate uncertainty about what he is doing. It would not be hard to see Scribe B – more confident, closing the manuscript, intervening in Scribe A's stints – as the supervisor here. However, I only see Scribe B stepping in to provide the start of a homily once, on fol. 50r, and stepping in to complete the end once, on fol. 84v. Another stint, from 103v.16–104r.21, sees him work through to the end of a homily and then write the next text's opening lines, but the moment of handover seems to me more likely to be connected with the end of a side than with the ending and beginning of homilies. That leaves five 'interruptions' to Scribe A's work that are not related

to textual breaks at all. The rather large gaps between his interventions also need to be accounted for. Assuming 21 lines per side, and accepting my proposal of Scribe C, the gaps between Scribe B's interventions in Scribe A's work are 631 manuscript lines, then 69, 519, 57, 1, 708, and 173 before Scribe A writes the final 447 lines to his allotted quires. This extreme variability is striking, and is some distance from the interactions between Scribes B and C in Julius A. x or indeed the much cleaner division between the Nowell scribes. In particular, the very large gaps between Scribe B's work on fols. 50r and 65r, between fols. 68v and 84r, and between fols. 86v and 103v suggest that if he were supervising Scribe A, he was doing so rather lightly, bearing in mind Gullick's estimation of 200 lines per day as "a good working figure" for what scribes may have been able to produce.<sup>95</sup>

Whatever the relationship between Scribes A and B, it is made yet more complicated by the presence of my Scribe C. It is hard to avoid the impression that we are seeing at least one, and perhaps two, scribes learning their craft – albeit one at a rather more advanced stage. In which case, despite Scribe B's newer looking hand, he must have been senior. This provides another complication to the narrative of Square minuscule being neatly phased out, but more interestingly provides an insight into the scribal practices lying behind the production of the Blickling Homilies. In this context, it suffices to note that the manuscript is, I think, rather less like the Nowell Codex than has sometimes been assumed, and yet is similarly suggestive of the use of a copying project to develop skills in a scriptorium by a group of people working in close co-operation.

Another manuscript produced by two scribes (A and B), but with a brief intervention by a third (Scribe C) and a large number of other hands making additions and alterations, is Royal 7 C. xii.<sup>96</sup> Ælfric's hand has been identified in

95 Gullick, 'How Fast Did Scribes Write?', p. 238.

96 Gneuss and Lapidge, *Handlist*, §472; Ker, *Catalogue*, §257. All scholars are agreed that Scribe A wrote fols. 4r–25r.25 and fols. 46r.2–90v.24 with Scribe B producing fols. 25v.1–46r.1, 91r.1–197r.25, and from 197v.6 up to the end of the manuscript at fol. 218r.9; Scribe C wrote the first five lines of fol. 197v. Scragg, *Conspectus*, identifies thirteen hands contemporary with the production of the manuscript, §709–§717, and seven making additions and alterations thereafter; Stokes and Brookes note four contemporary scribes supplemented by three contemporary altering hands and a slightly later glossator in the entry in *DigiPal*. Stokes notes that the scribes all have similar hands, implying that they learnt from Ælfric, *English Vernacular Minuscule*, p. 80. The manuscript has been most fully discussed by N.E. Eliason and Peter Clemoes in their facsimile of *Aelfric's First Series of Catholic Homilies: British Museum, Royal 7 C XII, fols. 4–218, EEMF 17* (Copenhagen, 1966), and I follow their discussion closely below.

a number of places in the manuscript, making notes and changes to this copy of his own work.<sup>97</sup> Scribe C's intervention is not similar to that by my proposed Scribe C in Scheide 71. It has its own, fairly assured, style with no indications of a lack of confidence, and so has more in common with the (probable) brief interventions by Scribe D in Julius E. vii and Scribe C in Vitellius C. v. It is interesting that Royal 7 C. xii Scribe C seems to have started to write on the sixth line of the side, but that any letters produced have been erased and written over by Scribe B.<sup>98</sup> Possibly this is an indication that the scriptorium had no issue with different scripts sharing a side, but were not prepared to have them sharing a line.<sup>99</sup> But most likely it can be attributed to Elliason and Clemoes' identification of a somewhat *ad hoc* approach to which scribe worked at which moment.

Scribe B wrote the headings and Latin throughout. On this basis, along with his corrections to the work of both scribes, it seems probable that he "bore the greater share of responsibility" for the project.<sup>100</sup> This is fairly clear as far as it goes but, as shown by Scheide 71, writing more should not be equated with supervision. Scribe B made some textually significant errors in copying, including text which should have been cancelled, and even incorporated redundant cross-signs. To judge from his hand in this manuscript, such cross-signs seem to have been Ælfric's method of identifying insertions and other changes in a draft; Scribe B does not seem to have recognised these for what they are in the copy-text and has mechanically transcribed them.<sup>101</sup> It is striking that the scribe gave so little thought to what he was producing when it seems certain that Ælfric himself used this manuscript: a note in his hand requests that a passage in homily XII be excised as it has now been treated at more length in his "oðre bec" ("other book"), presumably the Second Series.<sup>102</sup> The use of the

97 Not all readers are agreed that all of the Ælfrician interventions are his; Scragg, *Conspicuous*, adds §712a, b, and c to break up the contributions normally assigned to Ælfric into four distinct hands.

98 As noted by Lucas *et al.*, *ASMMF* 16, p. 38.

99 It is noted as an example of a manuscript with no concern for visual homogeneity by Gameson, 'Scribes and Scriptoria', n. 67 p. 111.

100 Elliason and Clemoes, *Royal 7 C xii*, p. 19. This means that, while he wrote fol. 46r.1, he did not write up to there and then hand over to Scribe B (as implied by the summary in note 96, above), but to the end of fol. 45v, coming back later to complete the heading to Scribe B's work on fol. 46r.

101 Scragg suggests that the copy was made "presumably from the author's draft or wax tablets", 'Old English Homiliaries', at p. 558.

102 The note is on fol. 64r and is discussed by Elliason and Clemoes in this context, *Royal 7 C xii*, p. 28, and by Sisam, 'Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies*', pp. 173–174.

past tense “we[...]forbudon” implies, as Sisam observes, that Ælfric had already made it clear that he did not want this section replicated – either by a direction in the exemplar or by discussing it with the scribes.<sup>103</sup> Elliason and Clemoes speculate that the multiple hands making minor adjustments could indicate that he “may well have let interested friends see the manuscript”.<sup>104</sup> This does not fit at all with Scribe B’s approach to his copy text; he seems really quite detached from the purpose of the production and from Ælfric’s own thinking, which is so vividly present in the marginal notes.<sup>105</sup> He does not even seem to have been a particularly strong scribe: Ker found that the “manuscript and especially the part in hand (2), is faultily written” with numerous straightforward errors.<sup>106</sup> Similarly, given the significance of the project as a working copy for the author, it is worth noting that there is little indication that the division of labour was carefully planned. The way in which one scribe took up the task where the other chanced to stop or began anew while the other was still at work suggests that their collaboration was rather casual.<sup>107</sup>

Indeed, when adding headings and incipits, Scribe B often has to deal with inadequate spacing and this seems likely to indicate that they were “something of an afterthought”.<sup>108</sup> We have here, then, a manuscript being produced under the auspices of a key and authorial figure, where the individual with major responsibility for production, correction, and final presentation is not especially skilled and has very little to do with – and apparently not much interest in – the meaning of the texts he was working on. Perhaps this individual and the errors he made inspired Ælfric’s famously pedantic instructions to his scribes; possibly he was simply worked too hard by the sudden need for textual production and reproduction to think that much about it.<sup>109</sup>

103 Kenneth Sisam, ‘MSS Bodley 340 and 342: Ælfric’s *Catholic Homilies*’, *Studies*, ed. Sisam (1953), 148–198 (first printed in *RES* 8 (1932), 51–68), p. 174.

104 *Royal 7 C xii*, p. 34.

105 Elliason and Clemoes call him “mechanical”, *Royal 7 C xii*, p. 31, in keeping with my definition of the term in “Whistle While You Work”.

106 *Catalogue*, §257.

107 Elliason and Clemoes, *Royal 7 C xii*, p. 19.

108 Elliason and Clemoes, *Royal 7 C xii*, p. 22; cf. Lucas *et al.*, *ASMMF* 16, p. 40.

109 Elliason and Clemoes note that the manuscript must have been written shortly after the 987 foundation of Cerne, and that it would have posed a challenge to the new scriptorium, *Royal 7 C xii*, p. 35; Gameson suggests a lack of resources at Cerne compared with Christ Church Canterbury as responsible for the relative lack of elegance in this copy, ‘Scribes and Scriptoria’, pp. 114–115. Contrast Scragg’s view of *Royal 7 C. xii* as a “fair copy made by skilled scribes”, ‘Old English Homiliaries’, p. 558. For Ælfric’s attitude to his scribes, see Scragg, ‘Ælfric’s Scribes’.

Royal 7 C. xii makes it clear that there was, or could be, a distinction between the main scribe on a particular project, and the person who commissioned and used the manuscript thereby produced. The many manuscripts associated with Ælfric's contemporary, Archbishop Wulfstan of York, exhibit a similar pattern and this survey will end with one example from that group. Wulfstan's hand can be seen in some ten manuscripts, with eight more having strong associations with him.<sup>110</sup> Many of these are described as examples of his 'Commonplace Book', though precisely what purpose they served is not entirely clear, and the methodical way in which they seem to have been assembled means that this title probably does not truly represent how they were produced.<sup>111</sup>

One such instance is Nero A. i, fols. 70–177, primarily produced by four scribes.<sup>112</sup> With the exception of folios 70–96, it is not entirely clear in what order the gatherings were intended to be; when originally made they may well have been free-standing and united a little later although Richard Sharpe

110 As listed and briefly discussed by Orchard, 'Wulfstan of York', pp. 696–697, manuscripts with his hand are: Harley 55; Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek MS G.K.S. 1595 (4°); London, BL, Cotton MS Claudius A. iii; London, BL, Cotton MS Tiberius A. xiii; Vespasian A. xiv; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hatton MS 20; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hatton MS 42; Rouen, Bibliothèque municipale MS U.109 (1382); York MS 1. Other manuscripts associated with Wulfstan are Cambridge, CCC MS 190 Part 1; Cambridge, CCC MS 265; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley MS 718; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius MS 121, fols. 9–110; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. MS 3182; and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Barlow MS 37, which is a twelfth or thirteenth-century manuscript but perhaps based on a lost copy of his 'handbook'. See also Ker, 'Handwriting of Wulfstan'; cf. Gameson, 'Book Production at Worcester', pp. 213–215 on the difficulty of assessing whether particular volumes were at Worcester or York, and which were Wulfstan's personal property.

111 Bethurum came up with the name in 'Archbishop Wulfstan's Commonplace Book', *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association of America* 57 (1942), 916–929, referring to CCCC 190, CCCC 265, Nero A. i, Junius 121, G.K.S. 1595 (4°), BM 1382 (U. 109), and Barlow 37. Following Bethurum, Loyn calls Nero A. i "a kind of theological commonplace book", *Wulfstan Manuscript*, p. 49. It remains in common usage, though often with a note on its inappropriate nature. See e.g. Patrick Wormald, 'Archbishop Wulfstan: Eleventh-Century State Builder', *Wulfstan*, ed. Townend (2004), 9–27, esp. pp. 10–11; Joyce Hill, 'Archbishop Wulfstan: Reformer?', *Wulfstan*, ed. Townend (2004), 309–324, p. 322. Gneuss and Lapidge, *Handlist*, call its various incarnations 'Wulfstan's Handbook'.

112 Gneuss and Lapidge, *Handlist*, §340; Ker, *Catalogue*, §163. The manuscript can be viewed online as part of *Digitised Manuscripts*. See also Appendix 4 on a mark of reading that it shares with the Nowell Codex. In addition to the general discussions noted in footnote 110, see Wormald, 'Holiness of Society', esp. pp. 194–201; Whitelock, 'Wulfstan at York', pp. 219–220. Scribe A wrote fols. 70r–96v; Scribe B fols. 97r–100r and 122r–177v; Scribe C fols. 100v–105v; Scribe D fols. 109r–120v; fols. 106–108 and 120–121r were originally blank.

argues that its size and contents demonstrate that the volume was “clearly intended to be carried around”, implying a single production with a specific purpose.<sup>113</sup> That two texts are repeated supplements the picture, common in Old English prose, of the manuscript as a work in progress.<sup>114</sup> However it was produced, Nero A. i now falls into two halves, with Old English in fols. 70–121 and Latin thereafter.

Loyn was confident to identify Scribe B as the “master scribe” on the basis that he wrote the bulk of the Latin text. We could also note that his work now surrounds that of Scribes C and D.<sup>115</sup> While Scribe D’s gatherings may have been a separate project when first produced, C’s work starts on a verso of Scribe B’s and we can therefore be certain that they worked together. The relative brevity of both C’s and D’s contributions is worth noting here: C producing most of one gathering and D two, against the far lengthier efforts of Scribes A and B. This is a clear step-change from the very short contributions discussed above as possible novice contributions, and Loyn regards all four main scribes as “clear, workmanlike, and substantially accurate”.<sup>116</sup> But it is evident that these two had comparatively restricted roles, and Scribe C makes a large number of errors in his short contribution. Omissions often result in messy insertions and frequent small-scale dittographies result in erasures or crossing out.<sup>117</sup> The scribe is in general “not a very careful writer”, with variable length of ascenders and descenders, frequent movement away from the ruled line, and changes in size and aspect in a manner similar to Scheide 71 Scribe A.<sup>118</sup> Nor does he change script when writing Latin at fol. 103r.2–3. This weakness was evidently recognised within the scriptorium, as Scribe C received closer guidance:

113 In the manuscript’s description in ‘Early English Laws’, online at <<http://www.earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk/laws/manuscripts/g/>>, last accessed 6/7/16. Wormald proposed that the manuscript probably originally consisted of gatherings 6–9, with the additions of 4, then 1–3, before 4 was expanded, 10 added on, and then 5 added to replace 1–3, which was later restored.

114 Malcolm Godden, ‘Editing Old English Prose and the Challenge of Revision or, Why It Is Not So Easy to Edit Old English Prose’, *Probable Truth*, eds. Gillespie and Hudson (2013), 91–110, notes the instability of prose texts, p. 110; Wormald, ‘Holiness of Society’ sees it as a carefully constructed piece of work, with the final product as “blueprints for a people of God”, p. 208; cf. Hill, ‘Reformer?’, p. 323.

115 Loyn, *Nero A. i*, p. 47. My Scribes A–D of fols. 70–177 are S3–S6 for Loyn, as he is discussing the Cottonian manuscript as a whole.

116 Loyn, *Nero A. i*, p. 24

117 Such as a scratchy þ on fol. 101v.23, or fol. 104v.20, where he wrote *sumes* twice at the start of the line.

118 Most notably on fol. 104v. See Loyn, *Nero A. i*, p. 28.

Wulfstan's hand starts and ends the admonition to bishops on fols. 100v.1 and 102r.3–4. It is reasonable, then, to see Scribe C as a weak scribe, and probably a rather inexperienced one. Indications are less clear in Scribe D's work: he does, for instance, distinguish between Latin and Old English by script and makes fewer superficial errors. But his hand, too, is rather messy and inconsistent with considerable variations in size.<sup>119</sup> Wulfstan writes the first half of D's final text at fol. 120r.8–15 and thus seems to be closely supervising him, as well as C. The archbishop was probably an unusually closely concerned overseer of scribal production: manuscripts written under his oversight were careful productions, and a number of writers have discussed his particular concern for producing effective documents.<sup>120</sup>

The role played by Loyn's 'master' Scribe B thus starts to diminish as the production of the manuscript is looked at in more detail. Further, like Ælfric's Scribe B in Royal 7 C. xii, Nero's Scribe B is not absolutely certain about what he is doing, as is most evident in his uncertain spacing of titles and rubrics.<sup>121</sup> Like Royal 7 C. xii, Nero A. i offers us an instance of a manuscript clearly produced for, under, and partially by a major writer and figure of authority. Within both projects, one scribe is given most of the work while others are given smaller roles and the necessary process of making the manuscript is apparently partially used as a training exercise for them. But the scribe who wrote the most cannot be seen to be overseeing or guiding the novices, nor is there any indication that any of the 'main' scribes were responsible for selecting and altering texts. Given the close interventions from both Wulfstan and Ælfric in these projects, and evident indications of uncertainty in the competent scribes delivering the bulk of the work, it makes most sense to see scriptorium management as a little distanced from the people whose hands appear in manuscripts. Instead, we can see individuals who are senior, by dint of authorship and structural authority, commissioning and sometimes closely supervising work, especially when performed by weaker scribes.<sup>122</sup>

119 See, for instance, fol. 111r.4–6 and 12–14.

120 Mann, 'Wulfstan's Alcuin Manuscripts', n. 100 p. 268; Loyn, *Nero A. i*, p. 46; Hill, 'Reformer?', p. 323.

121 Noted by Loyn, *Nero A. i*, p. 27.

122 Compare the interesting gospel-books produced for Judith of Flanders (Morgan M.708; Morgan M.709; Monte Cassino MS 437; Fulda MS Aa.21) which had one main scribe who has been identified as responsible for their idiosyncrasies, though it is unclear whether the scribe or Judith herself, or some form of collaboration between them, controlled "aesthetic and theological choices" in the process of production, Dockray-Miller, *Judith of Flanders*, pp. 30–31; see the detailed discussion (which Dockray-Miller follows closely) in McGurk and Rosenthal, 'Gospelbooks of Judith', pp. 256–268.

There is no need, then, to see one or other of the scribes directly involved in a project as overseeing or supervising it.<sup>123</sup>

The clearest instances we have thus suggest that individuals not directly involved with the physical production of a manuscript were the ones who decreed what was in it and how it was presented, in accordance with Cooper's suggestion that abbots and bishops were the most likely commissioners of manuscript projects.<sup>124</sup> There are certainly exceptions: Junius 85 + 86 almost certainly shows us a scribe adapting his texts; there is evidence that both Wulfstan and Ælfric revised their own texts and it remains a possibility that either or both may have been more intimately involved in copies that no longer exist. Our extant manuscripts of their work may, perhaps, have been transcribed from authorial manuscripts or at least manuscripts produced to their dictation.

This has implications for our reading of the Nowell Codex. Beyond the decision to bring them together in the first place, there is little evidence that the Nowell texts were significantly reshaped to fit into their new context – aside from abbreviation for immediately practical reasons in *Wonders* which, as noted in Chapter 4, results in places in an incoherent text. It is most likely, then, that a project as complex as the Nowell Codex was commissioned and, to a degree, overseen by a significant figure in the house in a similar manner to the Ælfrician and Wulfstanian productions discussed above. As with all of the manuscripts discussed here, the scribes then seem to have worked independently, carrying out a given brief with intermittent supervision which might pay close attention to one aspect or another of their work. There is nothing unusual about their combination of scripts, and nor is there anything unique in one scribe looking back over the work of another and making a few changes. The corrective energy they collectively brought to their manuscript, without producing particularly accurate texts, could be read in this context as an attempt to demonstrate that they had done so to an overseer, rather than a particular devotion to what they were working on. If, as I have tentatively suggested, a third hand corrected some of Scribe B's work and the same or another hand sought to restore some of his damaged text, this too would fit well into a scriptorium atmosphere of use and curation of manuscripts. There is every reason to see the production of the Nowell Codex as part of an early eleventh-century literary culture which was communal, responsive, and dynamic.

123 Although compare Heslop's account of Eadwig Basan as "the 'master' in the scriptorium" who probably "divided the work between the members of the team" when the York Gospels were being produced, 'Art and the Man', p. 295.

124 Cooper, *Monk-Bishops*, p. 88; cf. Conner's sense of "top-down institutional demands" on scribes, 'Matched Scribal Hands', p. 49.



### Final Suggestions

Following a volume so crowded with speculation based upon tottering towers of accumulated data, it would seem foolish to offer a definitive conclusion. We cannot finally hope to know what scribes did or how and why they did it. But I hope that this investigation joins a number of other publications in demonstrating that the process of engaging with a specific manuscript sympathetically and in extreme detail can be productive and stimulating, opening up wide questions about what texts were for and how individuals and communities produced and utilised manuscripts.

It should be clear that I do not read the Nowell Codex as (to caricature some other readings unfairly) an impoverished production by dim-witted scribes operating in a backwater with no sense of what they were working on. The scribes made multiple errors – but all scribes do, whether they are skilled or not, whether they are working on high- or low-status projects, and whether their exemplars are old or new. They struggled with their exemplars' more obscure forms, and this is very significantly more obvious in *Beowulf*. Though it is not much more heavily corrected than the others, their concerns with this text in particular are evident; it is clear, too, that Scribe B was not much more comfortable with it than was his colleague. There is no compelling need to see Scribe B definitely writing before 1013, and there cannot be any certainty on this point; I would follow Gneuss and Lapidge in restoring the manuscript's palaeographical period to "s. x/xi", with the understanding of a rather broad interpretation of those dates, following Ker, to approximately 975–1025. Historical context and literary interpretation suggest that it is most likely to have been produced towards the later end of that palaeographically assigned timespan, when there was clearly interest in bringing together Christian and heroic tradition, and old heroes may have become newly relevant. Provenance suggests that the manuscript may have come from Lichfield, though this is (if possible) even less certain than the date of production.

Moving away from date and place to what the scribes seem to have been asked to do is rather more interesting. Based on patterns of orthography and capitalisation, text types, linguistic parallels, and patterns of illustration, it seems almost certain that an ambitious commissioner took a very deliberate choice to bring at least four exemplars together. The first exemplar had religious texts including *Judith* and *Christopher* with at least two more – probably hagiographic – narratives, at least one of which was poetic. Two exemplars of *Wonders* were brought together, and that text was used to bridge the gap between the religious group and those from the fourth exemplar. This contained *Alexander* and *Beowulf*, and perhaps other heroic narratives which

were not selected for inclusion in the new production. As it included *Alexander*, this exemplar was certainly more recent than the eighth century.

The composite product thus produced united two worlds: the pagan and the Christian. But it also demonstrated a unification, in English and in England, of multiple cultures from elsewhere. The sequence from *Christopher to Wonders to Alexander* is the bridge, and these three texts together speak eloquently of the limits of human, masculine, and military authority. Once drawn into the same pattern, *Judith* and *Beowulf* readily offer similar readings. Collectively, they point towards the ways in which power can be effectively exerted with iron and aggression, but also to the limits of so doing and the need to find new ways of organising society. They also suggest a form of textual reception which is richly engaged with irony and perhaps somewhat detached from the surface tone of narrative; rather similar, in fact, to the deployment of heroic literature to mock Alcuin in Harley 208. Other resonances between the texts abound; there can be little doubt that, while eleventh-century readers struggled with some of the heroic history in *Beowulf*, they found its interests in kingship, authority, and the monstrous productive, and its narrative of conflict, politics, and peace relevant. It is clear from my discussion here and in Chapter 1 that I see these meanings as far more likely to be produced in the period of Cnut's kingship, but wherever the manuscript is placed in time similar readings can be found.

The investment of old texts with new meanings by placing them in a new context is an exciting creative endeavour; doing so by combining four exemplars with texts of radically different points of origin while bringing in different individuals to develop a new image scheme and simultaneously using it as a training ground starts to look wildly ambitious. It cannot be a surprise that things went wrong. Scribal nods to the exemplars might be a result of broadly mechanical copying rather than a commissioner's specification, but the shift in Scribe A's orthographic practice from *Alexander* to *Beowulf*, and the abortive effort to update some orthography in the prose text, perhaps speak of some lack of clarity in the instructions given, or changes of mind. Scribe A's difficulties with the images, and the draughtsmen's difficulty with what the scribe had done, along with an apparent lack of certainty about what to do with the frames, collectively suggest a project conceived without the necessary groundwork being undertaken to ensure practicalities were in place.

However, the richness of the resonances produced remains clear, and much of what is successful in the manuscript is embodied in the illustration of a *Cynocephalus* on 97(99) (BL100)r, shown in Figure 74. The corresponding image in Tiberius B. v, on fol. 80r, has a boar-like head, is naked, and is apparently eating a leaf from a tree. In Nowell, with no textual basis, the creature's



FIGURE 74 A noble Cynocephalus on Nowell 97(99) (BL100)r. See also colour plate 14.

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dog-like head sits on a body dressed in extravagantly flowing materials, made to appear more luxurious by the use of red, blue, orange and parchment to suggest different fabrics hanging together. The only other figure dressed with anything like this extravagance is the woman being eaten by the *Donestre* in §20 on 100(96) (BL103)v, shown as the second image in Figure 19. The colours

available had diminished by this point, and the woman and her clothes are simply parchment on a red background, but her flowing skirts stand in contrast to the nakedness of the monster: clothing makes her stand for us, the threatened visitor to the *Donestre*'s home. The clothing of the man getting gold from the realm of the giant ants, shown on 98(100) (BL101)r and in Figure 11, while less spectacular, performs this same function: bringing the human figure into the world of the reader as our agent visiting the marvels of the text. Similarly, the peaceful priest (101(BL104)v), the civilised council on the mountain (102 (BL105)r) (both in Figure 6), and the people characterised by generous hosting (103(BL106)r) (Figure 27) are all shown dressed in fairly standard clothing of an Anglo-Saxon style.

There can be little doubt, then, that this *Cynocephalus* is intended to appear as Anglo-Saxon, as normalised and civilised, or as far as he can when his head looks like a dog's.<sup>125</sup> There is no indication of this in the text, which makes the tribe sound frightening:

Hƿ habbað horses mana 7 eofores tuxas 7 hunda heafdu 7 heora oroð bið  
spýlce fýres leg.

*They have the manes of a horse and the tusks of a boar and dogs' heads and  
their breath is like a fire's blaze.*

The odd, arguably perverse choice made by Draughtsman A works perfectly in the context of the codex as a whole. Following *St Christopher*, the image clearly recalls that saint. Christopher is a uniquely civilised member of his tribe, and is ironically more like the readers than the urbanised but barbaric pagan king Dagnus. In its recollection of *St Christopher*'s ironies and its disturbance of easy certainties about what is monstrous and what is human, the figure also points towards Alexander's simultaneous foreignness and familiarity. It anticipates the oddly humanised monsters of Grendel and his Mother and the *Beowulf*-poet's skill in seeing through the eyes of the Dragon, alongside Beowulf's own occupancy of an awkward space between a Christian Anglo-Saxon king and a heathen Scandinavian warrior. Finally, as a beast dressed in heroic clothing, this figure echoes Holofernes' distortion of masculine ideals, and perhaps the unexpectedly heroic behaviour of Judith.

<sup>125</sup> Compare the zoo-anthropomorphic Evangelist symbols used in, for instance, Monte Cassino 437, where they wear similarly elaborate clothing, discussed as a cultural phenomenon by Dockray-Miller, *Judith of Flanders*, pp. 38–40.

The Nowell Codex, then, was compiled with some sophisticated ideas. Its presentation brings the texts together, interprets them, and echoes their different points of origin. Collectively, those texts invite the reader to find echoes and draw connections between heroes and monsters, and to discover different ways of reading the same moments with irony, pathos, or judgement. In doing so, the codex speaks to the concerns of the early eleventh century, fraught with questions about whether ferocious conflict could be resolved into peaceful rule; whether different cultures could co-exist; whether native culture could expand to draw in new elements; and whether a man could change his persona from vicious, apparently pagan, marauder into generous Christian emperor. Read as intertextually fluid, creative, and ambitious, the Nowell Codex fits perfectly into the history of the Anglo-Saxon imagination; as a flawed creative project, it forms an important and interesting part of eleventh-century manuscript production and literary history. A communal project inviting ambitious and productive engagement with its texts, offering multiple opportunities for re-readings, it can no longer be regarded as a surprising or degraded site for the final resting-place of *Beowulf*.



## Sections and Structural Ideas in *The Wonders of the East*

§ <sup>a</sup>	Wonder	Location	'Level'	'Danger' <sup>b</sup>
1	Many sheep.	Antimolima	Animals	
2	Merchants and rams as big as oxen.	Close to Archem- edon, city of the Medes		
3	Hens that burn whoever touches them.	Lentibelsinea,		
4	Eight-footed, two-headed, valkyrie- eyed wild beasts that burn whoever touches them.	towards the Red Sea		
5	Two-headed serpents whose eyes shine at night. <sup>c</sup>			
6	Donkeys with horns as big as oxen and snakes called <i>Corsias</i> which have horns as large as rams', and kill anyone who touches them. Pepper guarded by the snakes, and taken from them by men who burn the land to drive them away. <sup>d</sup>	A land south of Babylon	People's interac- tion with animals	
7	Half-dogs ( <i>Cynocephali</i> ) called <i>Conopenae</i> which breathe fire.	South of Egypt	Part humans	
8	Tall bearded part men called <i>Homodubii</i> that eat raw fish.	"On sumon lande" ("In a certain region")		
9	Large ants which guard gold, taken from them by humans who use camels as decoy and to carry the gold away.	Gorgoneous, by the river Capi	People's interac- tion with animals	
10	"Lond bunis" ("a settled area") with many camels. <sup>e</sup>	Between the Nile and Brixontes	People and animals	
11	Two faced, parti-coloured people who go to India to breed.		Part humans	

§ <sup>a</sup>	Wonder	Location	'Level'	'Danger' <sup>b</sup>
12	Three coloured men with lions' manes and big mouths which run away from people and sweat blood.	Ciconia in Gallia		
13	Huge men called <i>Hostes</i> which eat whoever they get hold of	East of the Brixontes		
14	Animals called <i>Lertices</i> with asses' ears, sheep's wool and birds' feet. <sup>f</sup>		Animals	
15	People with no heads and faces in their chests ( <i>Blemmyae</i> ). <sup>g</sup>	Islands south of the Brixontes	Part humans	
16	Huge, thick dragons. <sup>h</sup>		Animals	
17	Men which are human to the navel, and then like asses (Centaurs), which have birds' legs and run away from people.	Southern side of the ocean	Part humans	
18	The worst, most barbaric, men who have a hundred kings under them, and the lakes of the sun and the moon.	"Donne is oþer stow" ("Then there is another place")	Humans	
19	Trees that produce balsam.		Plants	
20	A kind of human called <i>Donestre</i> that know all languages and so get hold of visitors, eat them, and weep over their heads.	An island in the Red Sea	Part humans	
21	Large people with huge ears ( <i>Panotii</i> ) which run away from visitors.	To the east		
22	Men whose eyes shine like lamps on a dark night. <sup>i</sup>	An island		
23	The temple of the sun, and its priest who eats only oysters.	An island	Humans	
24	A golden vineyard, the grapes from which produce jewels.	In the direction of the rising sun	Plants	
25	A huge mountain kingdom, well ruled, where jewels are produced. <sup>j</sup>	In Babylonia, between the	Humans	
26	Bearded women who use tigers, lions, and lynx to hunt with their "scin lace" ("dazzling illusion"). <sup>k</sup>	mountain of the Medes and Armenia	Part humans	
27	Tall, marble coloured women with boars' tusks, long hair, and ox-tails, camels' feet and asses' teeth that were killed by Alexander the Great.			



§ <sup>a</sup>	Wonder	Location	'Level'	'Danger' <sup>b</sup>
28	Noble animals called <i>Catinii</i> and men who live on raw meat and honey.	By the ocean	Animals and part humans	
29	The <i>Catinii</i> again and hospitable kings.	On the edge of the ocean	Humans and animals	
30	Generous men who give women to any visitors. Alexander refused to hurt them. <sup>1</sup>			
31	Trees which produce precious stones.		Plants	
32	Dark coloured people called <i>Sigelwara</i> .		Part humans	

- a Sectional numbers are the same as in Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 184–203, following the Tiberius B. v presentation of the text (which is also followed by Bodley 614). These do not always match up with the Nowell presentation of the text.
- b Danger is not explicitly described in any text. I have used a basic three-tier system of shading, with darker shades suggesting less potential threat to humans, based on the descriptions provided in the Nowell text, with problematic instances noted.
- c In Tiberius, the serpents are in *Hallescentia*, in contrast to the “ealum godum” (“multitude of good things”) that fill the land, perhaps suggestive of the pepper guarded by snakes in §6 and gold guarded by ants in §10. Nowell excludes the description of *Hallescentia*, opening the section with “[Pe]os stow”, and thereby effectively placing the snakes in the same location as the previous entries. See Knock, ‘Analysis of a Translator’, p. 122 who discusses how this may have happened, and cf. Ford on the dislocation of image and text at this point in Tiberius B. v, *Marvel and Artefact*, pp. 70–72.
- d Nowell does not have a sectional break between the snakes and donkeys, though there seems to be a capital *O* missing. Unlike Tiberius, there is a sectional break between the horned beasts and the pepper guarded by the snakes.
- e Tiberius, followed by Orchard and Fulk, has *ylpenda* (“elephants”) here.
- f Tiberius says the *Lertices* are “on Brixontes” (“near the [River] Brixontes”). Nowell does not give the detail, with “Donne seondon” (“Then there are...”).
- g Mittman and Kim do not make this, or §16, 17, 23, 27, 30, and 32 as listed here, new sections, *Inconceivable Beasts*. They generally do so when Nowell uses a new capital; in each of these cases, the capital has been lost to marginal damage but was fairly clearly originally present.
- h The noun is one of Nowell’s stranger omissions, so technically dragons are not mentioned in the Nowell text although they are necessary to complete the sense and have therefore been assumed here.
- i No extant version attributes a possible danger to this tribe. Shining eyes may, as in the case of Grendel and the tribe to which Christopher belongs, have been associated with aggressive, cannibalistic, or just generally monstrous beings, but the text does not give any indication of a threat.

- j As discussed in Chapter 4, the rulers of this kingdom are not mentioned in Nowell, but are shown in the image. The grammar of the section does not work without them and so, like the dragons in note h, I have included them here; Rypins, *Prose Texts*, and Mittman and Kim, *Inconceivable Beasts*, also insert them into their respective transcriptions.
- k Nowell reads “mid heora scin” (102 (BL105)v.6). Line 7 is damaged at the start; the first clear letter is *e*, though it is almost certainly preceded by *n* (a reading Rypins also proposes, n. 6 p. 65). There is no comparable phrase in Tiberius. Orchard proposes “mid heora scine” in his notes, but does not attempt to make sense of this or incorporate it into his main text, *Pride and Prodigies*. Fulk prints *scinlace* and, according to his textual note, reads “scin...e” in the manuscript, *‘Beowulf’ Manuscript*. Mittman and Kim, *Inconceivable Beasts*, do not include *n* in their transcription and, like Orchard, do not seek to translate it. As a simplex and as a prefix, *scin* is fairly well-attested, with connotations of magic, illusions, and spirits; it seems safe to assume that something similar was here, perhaps with an otherwise unattested second element.
- l These may be identical with the hospitable kings in §29: the sectional opening and capital is lost at the top of 103 (BL106)v leaving only “...mancýn...” (“...race...”); probably originally, as Tiberius, “Ðis mancýnn...” (“This race...”).

## Images and Colours Used in *The Wonders of the East*

#	Page	§	Contents of image	Frame	Colours used	Probable artist
1	95(97) (BL98)v	1	Single ram standing on rocks looking to right away from text.	Four solid bars, floreate decorations in each corner.	Blue, yellow, black, (parchment).	A
2	95(97) (BL98)v	2	Two rams standing on rocks looking left and down to text.	Three solid bars, line across top.	Yellow, orange, (parchment).	A
3	96(98) (BL99)r	3	Two hens, one (cock-erel?) with left wing outstretched.	Three black lines, open to text on left.	Yellow, orange, black.	A (& B?)
4	96(98) (BL99)r	4	Two-headed eight-legged animal with lolling tongues and wide eyes looking left at text.	Solid bars at top and bottom, open to text at left; right side lost to damage: probably originally three sided.	Yellow, black, (parchment).	A
5	96(98) (BL99)v	5	Two-headed patterned snake across page with 'hiss' lines towards text.	Unframed.	Red, yellow, blue, black, (parchment).	A
6	96(98) (BL99)r	6	Two animals as if from above, vertical in frame: on left a patterned snake; on right a reptilian creature with horns and a bushy tail.	Four solid bars, decoration to three edges.	Yellow, black, red, blue.	A
7	97(99) (BL100)r	7	Dog-headed man dressed in Anglo-Saxon robes with leggings(?) and shoes.	Four solid bars.	Red, blue, brown, yellow, black.	A

#	Page	§	Contents of image	Frame	Colours used	Probable artist
8	98(100) (BL101)r	9	Baby camel tied to a tree; man in Anglo-Saxon dress with female camel loaded with gold pieces in a harness on rocks; across a river, large ants around pieces of gold; male camel chained around the neck being bitten by two ants.	Unframed.	Black, red, yellow, light blue, (parchment).	A (with later additions)
9	98(100) (BL101)v	10	Two camels facing left towards text on rocks.	Bars at top and bottom; possible bar to right but lost to damage; waving black line as fourth bar separating from text.	Red, yellow, orange, (parchment).	A & B
10	98(100) (BL101)v	11	Man with two faces (one facing left, the other right) holding a horn in right hand and foliate sceptre in left.	Four solid bars.	Light blue, black, orange, yellow, (parchment).	A
11	99(95) (BL102)r	?12 (or 13)	?Naked man with long hair facing left towards text and holding upside-down foliate sceptre in right hand next to text.	Four solid bars.	Red, yellow, (parchment).	B & A
12	99(95) (BL102)r	13 & 14	Sheep-like <i>Lertex</i> with long ears and talons on feet, facing old shepherd with crook on left of frame; beast-headed figure dressed in black on right of frame holding a leg in left hand and with right hand outstretched.	Three thickly drawn black lines, probable fourth on right lost to damage.	Black, yellow, light blue, (parchment).	A

#	Page	§	Contents of image	Frame	Colours used	Probable artist
13	99(95) (BL102)v	15	Headless man with mustachioed face in his chest, in Anglo-Saxon dress and leggings standing on rocks.	Four solid bars.	Red, yellow, (parchment).	A
14	99(95) (BL102)v	16	Two striped snakes, entwined, across the width of the page, with bearded chins.	Unframed, though boxed in with a thin line on the right of the page.	Light blue, yellow (parchment).	A
15	99(95) (BL102)v	17	A man's torso with arms outstretched and a bracelet on each wrist, possibly singing and facing the text, on a horse's body, standing on rocks.	Bar on the left side, another half-way up on the right and a short one from that into the body. Possibly a bar at the bottom lost to damage.	Black, yellow, orange, red, (parchment).	B
16	100(96) (BL103)r	18	Two circles each with hubs, a set of spokes set in a Greek cross, and a thin set of spokes set in an x.	Four solid bars.	Orange, red, black, (parchment).	A?
17	100(96) (BL103)v	19	A tree with three trunks rising out of entwined roots with a canopy of leaves and three flowers.	Unframed, with thin line at bottom.	Blue, yellow, orange, red, a washed out red, (parchment).	A
18	100(96) (BL103)v	20	On left, a humanoid figure with a reptilian head, naked with exposed phallus, holding a leg; on right, a woman with long hair and dress with flowing skirts apparently held up to expose legs, one foot cut off at the ankle.	Four solid bars, thinner on the right and at the top where it gives way to writing.	Red, (parchment)	B?

#	Page	§	Contents of image	Frame	Colours used	Probable artist
19	101 (BL104)r	21	A man, possibly naked and drawn in the same style as §11, facing away from the text, with large, trumpet-like ears and holding a small bow or possibly harp, with foliage in the bottom right corner.	Three solid bars, probable fourth on the right lost to damage.	Red, (parchment).	B & A
20	101 (BL104)v	22	Man in Anglo-Saxon dress with leggings and long hair, top half of face lost to damage.	Three solid bars, probable fourth at top lost to damage.	Red, blue, orange, yellow, (parchment).	A
21	101 (BL104)v	23	An elaborate building with main central tower and two flanking towers, image of a sun on low wall at centre bottom, with head and shoulders of a robed man above it.	Three solid bars, with bottom bar formed of three bars making the building's foundation.	Red, yellow, orange, blue, (parchment).	A
22	102 (BL105)r	24	A tree with three trunks rising out of entwined roots, two prongs emerging with buds on the ends, top lost to damage.	No frame visible.	Blue, red, yellow, (parchment).	B
23	102 (BL105)r	25	A ?table stretching across the page formed of five large circles, possibly shields, piled together, with three layers of pedestal emerging to the left, with three men sat behind it, heads and shoulders visible, two apparently in conversation.	No frame, though bar across bottom could be partial frame or part of image.	Blue, orange, yellow, red, black, (parchment).	B & A

#	Page	§	Contents of image	Frame	Colours used	Probable artist
24	102 (BL105)v	26	A woman with long hair and beard, facing away from the text and holding an hourglass shaped club in her left hand; right hand third of the image is separated with a straight line and has a dog-like animal at right angles to the woman and apparently on rocks.	Solid bars, one with decoration, around three sides, open to right away from text.	Orange, brown, (parchment).	B
25	102 (BL105)v	27	A naked woman, facing away from the text, with long hair and perhaps a tail, with the lower curve of breasts visible beneath her right arm, and left arm holding a sceptre.	Four solid bars, one on right becoming a thin line at the top.	Orange, (parchment).	B
26	103 (BL106)r	28 or 29	A man facing away from the text and sitting on a cushion inside a decorated arch, with left hand (possibly holding something) lost to damage.	Decorated arch within which figure sits forms frame.	Yellow, red, (parchment).	B
27	103 (BL106)r	28 & 29	Two cat-like animals bay-ing towards the text.	No frame.	(Parchment).	A & B
28	103 (BL106)r	30	Image space divided in half by a straight line, with a man in the left side in Anglo-Saxon dress carrying a crook and seemingly waving to the other man, who is mostly lost to damage but what remains looks near identical to the first.	Three solid bars, possibly fourth on right lost to damage.	Orange, yellow, brown, blue, (parchment).	A

#	Page	§	Contents of image	Frame	Colours used	Probable artist
29	103 (BL106)v	30	Man carrying a woman with long red hair, both clothed, standing on rocks. Both faces lost to damage.	Three solid bars, possibly fourth at top lost to damage.	Red, yellow, (parchment).	A
30	103 (BL106)v	31	A tree with four trunks rising out of a bed of earth with a canopy of leaves and two buds.	No frame, but line at bottom.	Red, yellow, blue.	B
31	103 (BL106)v	32	Man with mask-like face and perhaps a circular hat, holding a foliate sceptre towards text in his right hand, with trailing left hand reaching to small figure, possibly a naked woman.	Four solid bars around main figure.	Orange, (parchment).	B



# Scribal Corrections in the Nowell Codex

Corrections that have, to my knowledge, not been previously published are asterisked. This is not a concordance to, nor an edition of, scholarly lists of scribal corrections to *Beowulf*, but it is worth noting here that several corrections are noted by Zupitza and Kiernan but not by Orchard – and some vice versa. Where one reader explicitly discusses their difference of opinion, I make a note. Where Pulsiano identified an otherwise unidentified correction in his unpublished notes on the prose texts, I still asterisk and add a note. I have not included a few corrections noted by Kiernan and Orchard where I do not see them. Unless otherwise noted, references to Kiernan are to his *Electronic 'Beowulf'* 3.0; to Orchard are to his 'Reading *Beowulf*'; those to Pulsiano are to his unpublished notes on the manuscript; and those to Zupitza are to '*Beowulf*'. Scribe B's corrections to Scribe A's work are listed twice: in bold in the relevant gathering, and as a separate set. Gathering numbers follow Malone, *Nowell Codex*. I have not included the four uses of pointing discussed in Chapter 4, where I see Scribe A identifying sites where text was missing from his exemplar.

## Scribe A's Corrections

### *The Passion of St Christopher*

#### Gathering 1

91(93) (BL94)r.7	<i>þrýh peras</i> → <i>þrý peras</i> <sup>a</sup>	Attempt to correct missing text? See Chapter 4, pp. 152–155.
91(93) (BL94)v.7–8	<i>liges liges</i> → <i>liges</i>	Dittography with word repeated at the end of line 7 and start of line 8; first form erased.
91(93) (BL94) v.19–20	line and a half erased	Possible addition or emendation erased; not likely to be a dittography. See Chapter 4, pp. 166–168.
92(94) (BL95)r.11	<i>ꝥparode</i> → <i>ꝥsparode</i> <sup>b</sup>	* Eye-skip? Probably an immediate insertion.
92(94) (BL95)v.5	<i>geheol</i> → <i>geheold</i> <sup>c</sup>	* End of the line; possibly omitted by eye-skip but inserted almost immediately.
94(92) (BL97)r.8	<i>cempuh</i> → <i>cempum</i>	* Probably dittography for following <i>h</i> ; ascender mostly erased and first minim amended to created <i>m</i> . See Figure 31.

## Gathering 1

94(92) (BL97)v.1	<i>martýre pæs</i> → <i>martýr pæs</i>	Corrected by erasure. Possible dittography for <i>-e</i> and <i>-re</i> endings on 94(92) (BL97)r.18–20? Or grammatical error?
95(97) (BL98)r.3	<i>cristofurus</i> → <i>cristoforus</i>	* <i>u</i> overwritten to convert it (not very smoothly); presumably dittography for subsequent <i>u</i> and immediate correction. See Figure 31 and Chapter 4 p. 161.

- a *h* is suggested by Rypins as the erased letter; I cannot make any shape out beneath the erasure. Rypins also sees erasures 91(93) (BL94)r.17 (a single letter); 92(94) (BL95)r.18 (of “about twelve letters”); 93(91) (BL96)r.2 (of “ten to twelve letters”); 93(91) (BL96)r.9 (“rest of the line”, in a space of about ten letters); 101 (BL104)v.20 (“an uncertain number of letters”, in a space for maximum of three). I am reasonably certain that none of these spaces is an erasure, with the larger spaces gaps deliberately left in order to start a new line with a marginal capital. Pulsiano expressed uncertainty about whether there are erasures in these sites. Cf. 92(94) (BL95)v.6 where neither Rypins nor I see an erasure.
- b That the *s* was initially omitted is very probable, in comparison with shape and placement in line 8 *ondsparode* and gap between 7 and *æfter* in line 10.
- c That the *d* was added later is almost certain, based on its size and placement compared with the rest of the word; cf. *ð* in *cpæð*, line 3.

*The Wonders of the East*

## Gathering 1

97(99) (BL100)v.18	<i>pa mem</i> → <i>pa men</i>	* Minim error; probably immediately corrected by erasure; cf. 158 (BL161)r.19 though perhaps letter never completed; cf. incomplete <i>a</i> at 161 (BL164)r.8.
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## Gathering 2

101(BL104)r.1	<i>Fpordum</i> → <i>pordum</i>	* Marginal <i>F</i> shape in line with text is clear; presumably erased though appears faded rather than scraped away. Must have been a marginal capital, though smaller than most and no capital <i>F</i> features in the Nowell <i>Wonders</i> , though one is probably lost on 99(95) (BL102) v.16–18, which would have been rather larger than this to judge by the termini that remain.
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101(BL104)r.5	7.x. <i>brde</i> → 7.x. <i>brade</i>	Superscript <i>a</i> , rather faded but in Scribe A's hand, for omitted letter.
101(BL104)r.12	<i>lichoman spa h??</i> → <i>spa hpi</i>	* Erasure and perhaps some stray ink marks above <i>-pi</i> , though letters do not look disturbed and correction must have been immediate; I am not certain about this correction.
102(BL105)r.7	<i>media dune</i> → <i>meda dune</i> <sup>a</sup>	Single-letter erasure; possibly dittography for <i>armoenia</i> on the same line.
102(BL105)v.11	<i>oxan tal</i> → <i>oxan tægl</i>	* <i>g</i> inserted, probably soon after being omitted, or possibly an unusual ligature form with <i>æ</i> . It occurs several times in <i>Beowulf</i> , where I follow Kiernan in seeing it as a correction; cf. e.g. 130 (BL133)v.19 below.
103(BL106)v.17	<i>on onyne</i> → <i>on onsyne</i>	Omitted high <i>s</i> fairly clumsily written over second minim of <i>n</i> . Numerous indications of clumsy copying at this point at the end of <i>Wonders</i> . In this word alone, <i>y</i> does not appear to be dotted and <i>e</i> interferes with <i>Sigehwara</i> image; see Figures 16 and 44.

a As Rypins notes, *i* is not certainly the erased letter; whatever it was, it was not in ligature with *a*.

### *The Letter of Alexander to Aristotle*

#### Gathering 2

105 (BL108)r.6	<i>spa þu mec</i> → <i>spa þu me</i>	Single-letter erasure based on changed approach to orthography; see Chapter 4 pp. 162–163.
105 (BL108)r.10	<i>þonne cunge</i> → <i>þon cunge</i>	Two letters erased.
105 (BL108)v.3	<i>þe cýþde</i> → <i>þe cýþde</i>	* Cross-stroke carefully erased.
105 (BL108)v.10	<i>þite þu þ??e</i> → <i>þite þu þ hie</i>	* Erasure and overwriting here; somewhat misshapen <i>þ</i> may be part of the corrective text.

Gathering 3<sup>1</sup>

108(116) (BL119)r.9	<i>minra feond</i> [a] → <i>minra freond</i> [a]	Superscript <i>r</i> with dot beneath, probably indicates proof-reading stage to identify and add in omitted letter.
108(116) (BL119)v.10	<i>ymb mec</i> → <i>ymb me</i>	Single-letter erasure; see 105 (BL108)r.6 above.
108(116) (BL119)v.12	<i>mec læddon</i> → <i>me læddon</i>	Single-letter erasure; see 105 (BL108)r.6 above.
109(117) (BL120)r.17	ʔ ?????? <i>ealne</i> → ʔ <i>ealne</i>	Probably dittography for <i>ʔminne</i> from line above.
109(117) (BL120)v.7	ʔ <i>prīðode</i> . → ʔ <i>pridode</i> .	Cross-piece almost entirely scraped away.
110(118) (BL121)r.2	<i>mid mec</i> → <i>mid me</i>	Single-letter erasure; see 105 (BL108)r.6 above.
110(118) (BL121)r.7	<i>þusenda eall</i> → <i>þusenda eal</i>	Second, presumably dittographic, <i>l</i> scratched away; much of margin has been burnt but quite a lot of space originally left after this word and perhaps more was deleted.
110(118) (BL121)v.2	<i>He?t ic þa</i> → <i>Het ic þa</i>	Additional letter scratched away completely.
110(118) (BL121)v.14	<i>þus ic</i> → <i>þus ic</i>	* Cross-piece almost entirely scraped away. Correction is in error for unaltered <i>þ</i> line 11, which has <i>þurh þa lond</i> ; see Chapter 4 p. 161. <sup>a</sup>
110(118) (BL121)v.16–17	<i>seo ea~ toðe</i> → <i>seo ea toðe</i>	Hyphen indicating word broken across lines erased.
111(119) (BL122)r.1	<i>we ær bipriton</i> → <i>we ær biriton</i>	Single-letter erasure, perhaps in partial effort to update orthography; see Kiernan, <i>'Beowulf' Manuscript</i> , p. 144.
111(119) (BL122)r.2	<i>þære by?rig</i> ʔ → <i>þære byrig</i> ʔ	Single letter erased, possibly <i>c</i> , though this removed shape looks above the line.

1 This gathering is still misplaced as gathering 4; I follow Rypins in reordering it and calling it 'Gathering 3' to reflect as closely as possible the scribes' original conception. Kiernan's foliation system, as discussed above in 'Terms Used', and in more detail in Thomson, 'Manuscript Stability', works well here to show both the 'original' and current positions of these pages.

111(119) (BL122)r.9	<i>in þa burhg in</i> → <i>in þa burh in</i>	Single-letter erasure, presumably at same stage as other erasures on this side, perhaps as part of updating orthography; cf. Kiernan, <i>'Beowulf' Manuscript</i> , p. 144.
111(119) (BL122)r.19	<i>sum? ongris lica</i> → <i>sum ongris lic</i>	Single letters erased after each word; some marks remain but are unclear. Possible confusion with <i>un[hy]rliran</i> two lines below, on 111(119) (BL122)v.1. <sup>b</sup>
112(120) (BL123)r.2	7 <i>sægdon</i> → 7 <i>sædon</i>	Careful single-letter erasure, perhaps updating orthography; cf. 105 (BL108)r.6 above. See Chapter 4.
112(120) (BL123)r.3	<i>hit fin?an</i> → <i>hit findan</i>	* Letter erased and <i>d</i> written above, a little scratchily given the rougher surface; change probably made immediately. <sup>c</sup>
113(121) (BL124)v.3	<i>mid scyldum us</i> → <i>mid scyldum us</i>	Careful single-letter erasure of dittographic error.
114(122) (BL125)r.4	<i>slihte tungan</i> → <i>slite tungan</i>	Careful single-letter erasure, perhaps to align with use of verb in previous line <i>sliton</i> 7 <i>taeron</i> ? Or simple orthographic correction.
114(122) (BL125)r.16	<i>pe usic gereste</i> → <i>pe us gereste</i>	Two-letter erasure; see 105 (BL108)r.6 above.

- a Rypins notes the erroneous readings in these two places, but not the erasure.  
b Rypins thinks two letters erased after *ongrislic*; Pulsiano's notes suggest he saw one letter erased here; I agree, and it looks most like *a*, but *-ra-* is more explicable in context.  
c Identified by Pulsiano.

#### Gathering 4

116(108) (BL111)r.5	<i>þonces usic</i> → <i>þonces us</i>	Two-letter erasure; see 105 (BL108)r.6 above.
116(108) (BL111)r.16	<i>spa ???????? mid</i> → <i>spa mid</i>	Probably dittography of <i>mid minne</i> , which follows.
116(108) (BL111)r.19	<i>hie usic</i> → <i>hie us</i>	Two-letter erasure; see 105 (BL108)r.6 above.
116(108) (BL111)v.1–2	full line and about a word erased	Dittography, probably of 116(108) (BL111) r.13–14 which starts with the same phrase ( <i>Mid hy pe þa</i> ) as precedes the erased space, in which case correction was probably almost immediate.

## Gathering 4

116(108) (BL111)v.15	<i>mec to cumenne</i> → <i>me to cunenne</i>	Single-letter erasure; see 105 (BL108)r.6 above.
116(108) (BL111)v.16	γ <i>mec mid</i> → γ <i>me mid</i>	Single-letter erasure; see 105 (BL108)r.6 above.
116(108) (BL111)v.18	<i>gerelen mec</i> → <i>gerelan me</i>	* Single-letter erasure; see 105 (BL108)r.6 above. <i>e</i> overwritten to <i>a</i> , probably an immediate change; cf. 122(114) (BL117)r.15 below. <sup>a</sup>
117(109) (BL112)r.4	<i>he mec sona</i> → <i>he me sona</i>	Single-letter erasure; see 105 (BL108)r.6 above.
117(109) (BL112)r.13	<i>ond spar</i> → <i>ond sparo</i> <sup>b</sup>	<i>o</i> written over the extended tail of <i>r</i> .
117(109) (BL112)r.18	<i>mec frægn</i> → <i>me frægn</i>	Single-letter erasure; see 105 (BL108)r.6 above.
117(109) (BL112)v.4	γ <i>mec bæd</i> → γ <i>me bæd</i>	Single-letter erasure; see 105 (BL108)r.6 above.
117(109) (BL112)v.5	γ <i>mec eac</i> → γ <i>me eac</i>	Single-letter erasure; see 105 (BL108)r.6 above.
118(110) (BL113)r.2	<i>he wið mec</i> → <i>he wið me</i>	Single-letter erasure; see 105 (BL108)r.6 above.
119(111) (BL114)r.20	þ <i>pepenu</i> → þ <i>pe pæpenu</i>	* <i>pe</i> written above the line in a lighter shade but in Scribe A's hand; <i>e</i> converted to <i>æ</i> by a low <i>a</i> bowl. Dot beneath gap for <i>pe</i> suggests proof-reading phase. <sup>c</sup>
121(113) (BL116)r.13	þa fy <i>ðonne</i> → þa fyr <i>ðonne</i>	* <i>r</i> squeezed into space (compare <i>fyr</i> on same line).
121(113) (BL116)v.8	<i>foron fo</i> → <i>foron forð</i>	* This is not certain, but <i>rð</i> is well into the margin and in a darker ink than <i>foron fo</i> .
122(114) (BL117)r.15	<i>peorede somed</i> → <i>peorode somod</i>	* <i>e</i> over written to make <i>o</i> ; possible ditto-graph from <i>peorede</i> ; probably an immediate change. Cf. 116(108) (BL111)v.18 above and 152 (BL155)r.13 below. <sup>d</sup>

a Rypins notes the alteration of *e* to *a*, but not the erasure of *c* (which is clear from the lack of a tongue on *e* and the marking of the parchment).

b Rypins suggests the *o* was originally a *u*: it is more likely that what he saw as part of *u* was originally an extravagantly extended tongue of *r*, which *o* has been written over.

c Rypins notes the inserted *pe*, but not the adjustment of *e* to *æ*.

d Also identified by Pulsiano.

## Gathering 5

123 (BL126)r.7	<i>under porre</i> → <i>under pore</i>	Dittography; single-letter erasure.
123 (BL126)v.17	<i>leodþeape ??</i> → <i>leodþeape</i>	* This is not certain, but there is an unusual gap, some shadowing, and a small dot of ink remaining, all of which is consistent with the erasure of letters.
124 (BL127)r.15	<i>treopu gong in</i> → <i>treopu gongun</i>	* <i>u</i> is strangely shaped, with left hand minim interfering with <i>g</i> and lacking flick to the left at the top. Scribe A's <i>u</i> is usually rather narrower than this, as in <i>treopu</i> here, so this could have been performed more neatly. <sup>a</sup>
127 (BL130)r.8	<i>hie ??????</i> → <i>hie</i>	Probably a dittography, possibly for <i>hie restað</i> in same line. <sup>b</sup>

a Rypins prints *gongan* and sees no correction.

b Probably for *hie restað* at start of current MS line.

*Beowulf*

## Gathering 5

129 (BL132)r.10	<i>hronð rade</i> → <i>hronrade</i>	Single-letter erasure; possible dittography for <i>sittendra</i> in previous line. <sup>a</sup>
130 (BL133)v.19	<i>scopes sæde se</i> → <i>scopes sægde se</i>	<i>g</i> inserted; cf. 102(BL105)v.11 above and Kiernan, <i>'Beowulf' Manuscript</i> , p. 144.

a Orchard suggests *hronerade* as the original word here, but what can be seen of the erased shape does not look like Scribe A's *e*; there seems to me to be the left hand edge of a bowl as for *d* or *ð*, and probably some of a cross-piece; Kiernan also sees "*d* or (more likely) *ð*". This does, however, make the original error harder to explain: my justification requires the letter to be *d*.

## Gathering 6

132 (BL134) r.14 <sup>a</sup>	<i>scýppen forscrifēn</i> → <i>scýppend forscrifēn</i>	Partially superscript <i>d</i> added by Scribe B; perhaps a faded insertion mark beneath.
132 (BL134)r.15	<i>in cames cýnne</i> → <i>in caines cýnne</i>	Minim error, corrected by micro-erasure. <sup>b</sup>

## Gathering 6

132 (BL134)r.19	<i>þanon untȳ ras</i> → <i>þanon untȳdras</i>	* Possibly a mark beneath the omission; <i>d</i> written in clumsily and partially over <i>ȳ</i> at a later stage.
133 (BL135)r.20	<i>þorfte beortre</i> → <i>þorfte beorhtre</i>	<i>h</i> a later superscript insertion by Scribe B, with insertion mark.
133 (BL135)r.20	<i>tote tobanū</i> → <i>bote tobanū</i>	Eye-skip to <i>tobanū</i> , corrected by overwriting and resulting in low, square bowl for <i>b</i> .
134 (BL136)r.5	<i>penan pel</i> → <i>pendan pel</i>	Dittography for <i>penan</i> in line 4; change made immediately by overwriting; <i>a</i> converted to <i>d</i> and <i>n</i> to <i>a</i> .
134 (BL136)r.9	<i>maga healfdes</i> → <i>maga healfdenes</i>	Change made immediately by overwriting.
134 (BL136)r.19	<i>manna þerf ðone</i> → <i>manna þearf ðone</i>	Change made immediately by overwriting.
135 (BL137)r.17	<i>eoper sum sec on</i> → <i>eoper sum secg on</i>	* Low <i>g</i> added later in Scribe A's hand; <i>c</i> originally written for <i>cg</i> .
135 (BL137) v.11	<i>ordfruma ecþeop</i> → <i>ordfruma ecgþeop</i>	Low and tight <i>g</i> written in Scribe A's hand; <i>c</i> originally written for <i>cg</i> .
135 (BL137) v.14–15	<i>holdne   hine</i> → <i>holdne   hige</i>	Dittography for <i>hine</i> in line 13; <i>g</i> written over <i>n</i> .
135 (BL137) v.15	<i>hlaford hlaford</i> → <i>hlaford</i>	Dittography; line through second <i>hlaford</i> .
135 (BL137) v.20	<i>spa pe soplice</i> → <i>spa pe . soplice</i>	Point inserted, presumably due to concern over word-spacing during proof-reading, but cf. <i>pesan</i> in line 19 with <i>e</i> and <i>s</i> joined. <sup>c</sup>
136 (BL138)v.6	<i>ancre fæft eofoꝛ</i> → <i>ancre fæst eofoꝛ</i>	Careful erasure with cross-piece mostly scratched off.
137 (BL139)r.14	<i>plocn hæleð</i> → <i>plonc hæleð</i>	Metathesis corrected by erasure and overwriting. <sup>d</sup>
138 (BL140)r.17	<i>is þis eafoꝛan</i> → <i>is his eafoꝛan</i>	<i>þ</i> written for <i>h</i> , corrected by erasure of the descender, probably immediately.
138 (BL140)r.18	<i>sohte holdre pine</i> → <i>sohte holdne pine</i>	<i>r</i> written for <i>n</i> , corrected by erasure of the descender, probably immediately.
138 (BL140) v.16	<i>bord her onbidman</i> → <i>bord her onbidan</i>	<i>m</i> scratched out; presumably a dittography for <i>griman</i> in line 15.
138 (BL140) v.20	<i>heaðorof heoldon</i> → <i>heaðoreaf heoldon</i>	Superscript <i>e</i> and <i>o</i> converted by overwriting in Scribe A's hand. Dot beneath <i>e</i> indicates proof-reading stage; the two corrections may have been made separately.



139 (BL 141)r.5	<i>orþancum pære þu</i> → <i>orþancum pæs þu</i>	Erasure of a single letter between <i>pæs</i> and <i>þu</i> and perhaps erasure and overwriting. <sup>e</sup>
139 (BL 141)v.2	<i>grendel scealt pið</i> → <i>grendel sceal pið</i>	Single-letter erasure after <i>sceal</i> ; deleted letter not visible but Kiernan identifies it with UV.
139 (BL 141) v.13	<i>bere oþðe sinne</i> → <i>bere oþðe sidne</i>	<i>n</i> converted to <i>d</i> by overwriting, probably immediately.

- a Recorded as line 13 by Orchard.
- b Kiernan suggests the possibility of a possible extended final stroke of *a* joining the minims.
- c Here as elsewhere I attribute the insertion of points where there is no space for them as an attempt to clarify word division, which assumes that in the original writing the scribe did not read the words as distinct; cf. 164 (BL 167)v.9. Kiernan seems to follow the same reasoning in his notes to the digital edition where he describes the point as “inserted” and compares with the same example as above.
- d Kiernan suggests that the erased word beneath might be *oleð*.
- e I am following Kiernan here, but do not see the erasure and overwriting to convert *r* to *s*, only the erasure of *e*.

### Gathering 7

140 (BL 142) v.14	<i>dol?scaðan dæda</i> → <i>dolsceaðan dæda</i>	* Scribe B's insertion mark and superscript <i>e</i> ; erasure may have been by Scribe B, or performed at a different time; cf. 138 (BL 140)v.20. <sup>a</sup>
140 (BL 142) v.19	<i>þeos medo sæl heal</i> → <i>þeos medo heal</i>	Erased text cannot be seen, but is identified by Kiernan with UV. Orchard suggests conversion of <i>sæl</i> to <i>heal</i> , but this is unlikely as Scribe A would normally overwrite if the correction was made immediately. Dittography for <i>beorsele</i> in line 17?
141 (BL 143)r.20	<i>oðer man man æfre</i> → <i>oðer man æfre</i>	Dittography corrected by erasure.
142 (BL 144)r.7	<i>hpiet þu porn</i> → <i>hpæt þu porn</i>	* Original <i>i</i> converted to the <i>a</i> bowl of <i>æ</i> by overwriting.
142 (BL 144)r.13	<i>þa git ogeogod</i> → <i>þa git ongeogod</i>	Scribe B's mark of insertion and superscript <i>n</i> .
142 (BL 144) v.10–11	<i>grape hpæpre</i>   <i>hpæpre</i> → <i>grape</i>   <i>hpæpre</i>	Dittography corrected by erasure.

## Gathering 7

142 (BL 144) v.15–16	<i>Cpa mec</i> → <i>Spa mec</i>	* Very curious error, with initially written marginal initial C converted to S with a lower curve, quite differently proportioned from the rest of the shape.
143 (BL 145)v.2	[ <i>pit</i> ] <i>dugt?</i> . <i>secge</i> → [ <i>pit</i> ] <i>duge</i> . <i>secge</i>	<i>t</i> converted to <i>e</i> by overwriting, probably immediately by Scribe A given the scribes' usual corrective approaches, though resultant shape looks quite like Scribe B's. <sup>b</sup>
143 (BL 145) v.15	<i>gæp ef se þe</i> → <i>gæp eft se þe</i>	Superscript <i>t</i> added in Scribe A's hand, with dot beneath the space.
144 (BL 146)r.5	<i>eode pealþeo forð</i> → <i>eode pealþeop forð</i>	Semi-superscript <i>p</i> inserted, probably by Scribe B though with no mark of insertion.
145 (BL 147)v.1	<i>no ic meðan</i> → <i>no ic me an</i>	* This seems unlikely, as <i>meðan</i> is an accepted reading, but the damage to <i>ð</i> clearly looks like an erasure in the physical document.
146 (BL 148)v.3	<i>sona sonarn</i> → <i>sona onarn</i>	Dittography corrected by erasure.
146 (BL 148)v.5	[ <i>æþ</i> ] <i>hram</i> . <i>Onbræd</i> → [ <i>æþ</i> ] <i>hran</i> . <i>Onbræd</i>	Neat erasure of second arch of original <i>m</i> .
147a(131) (BL 149)r.6	<i>onræste he on</i> → <i>onræste</i>	Dittography, copying end of line 7 below. Corrected by vigorous erasure, mostly deleting final <i>e</i> of <i>onræste</i> .
147a(131) (BL 149)r.15	<i>ne pæs him drohtoð</i> → <i>ne pæs his drohtoð</i>	Erasure and overwriting, probably fairly immediately by Scribe A.

a Orchard notes the insertion of *e*, but not the probable erased letter.

b Zupitza suggests that the original letter may have been *u*; Kiernan sees a *t*, as do I. Both agree that a letter has been erased after what is now *duge*, included here although I do not see it.

## Gathering 8

147 (BL 150)r.11	<i>leode ængum nýtte</i> → <i>leode ænigum nýtte</i>	Superscript <i>i</i> inserted, probably by Scribe B based on its weight, but lacking his mark of insertion.
147 (BL 150)r.14	<i>feorhie meahte</i> <i>ealgian</i> → <i>feorh ealgian</i>	Dittography, copying line 15 (erased text supplied by Kiernan from UV).
147 (BL 150)v.1	<i>gehpylre scolde</i> → <i>gehpylre scolde</i>	Superscript <i>c</i> in Scribe A's hand, but no mark of omission so probably made almost immediately.

148 (BL151)v.16	<i>cuðre hpilum</i> → <i>cuðe hpilum</i>	Single-letter erasure.
149 (BL152)r.6	<i>fæhðe fyrene</i> → <i>fæhðe fyrena</i>	<i>a</i> written above <i>e</i> in Scribe A's hand; no attempt to erase <i>e</i> .
149 (BL152)r.20	<i>moste moste selfes</i> → <i>moste selfes</i>	Dittography corrected by erasure. Eleven small vertical scratches above erased space which I cannot explain. Pen trials?
152 (BL155)r.13	<i>beferan be[orn]</i> → <i>beforan be[orn]</i>	<i>o</i> written over <i>e</i> , probably immediately; Cf 122(114) (BL117)r.15 above.
152 (BL155)r.14	<i>beran feopulf gepah</i> → <i>beran beopulf gepah</i>	Dittography – copying <i>feoh</i> from line below – corrected by erasure and overwriting to convert <i>f</i> to <i>b</i> .
153 (BL156)r.11	<i>hilde pi s?san</i> <i>gomen</i> → <i>hilde pi san gomen</i>	Erasure, with no clear indication of the cause of the error. <sup>a</sup>
153 (BL156)v.5	<i>he ær moste heold</i> → <i>he ær mæste heold</i>	Superscript addition in Scribe A's hand with his mark of alteration beneath, and no attempt to erase <i>o</i> . Made at proof-reading stage.
153 (BL156)v.7	<i>[f]ea anum</i> → <i>feaū anum</i>	Superscript <i>ū</i> in Scribe A's hand and probably his mark of alteration beneath, though the area is damaged.
154 (BL157)r.10	<i>pæs geefned</i> → <i>pæs geæfned</i>	* <i>e</i> altered to <i>æ</i> with narrow <i>a</i> bowl, probably immediate change by Scribe A.
154 (BL157)r.11	<i>betst bedorinca</i> → <i>betst beado rinca</i>	Superscript <i>a</i> in Scribe A's hand with no mark of alteration.
154 (BL157)r. 12–13	<i>pæs on bæl  </i> <i>gearu eþgesýne</i> → <i>pæs   eþgesýne</i>	Dittography, corrected by erasure, copying from the start of line 12.
154 (BL157)v.17	<i>sele gepitiað puldor</i> → <i>sele bepitiað puldor</i>	Superscript <i>b</i> in Scribe A's hand, with <i>g</i> erased and Scribe A's mark of alteration beneath <i>e</i> . Presumably changed at proof-reading stage; no apparent reason to delete <i>g</i> here (unlike e.g. 153 (BL156)v.5 above); having done so, no reason not to write <i>b</i> in resultant space.

a Kiernan says that UV suggests “previous high *s* and another letter were erased” in his notes on this side. Neither erased letter is now visible and I cannot see any localised reason for this miscopying.

## Gathering 9

155 (BL158) v.9	<i>hunferþe þýle</i> → <i>hunferþ þýle</i>	<i>e</i> erased almost completely. Possible dittography for <i>ferhþe</i> , now split across lines 10 and 11, suggested by Kiernan.
155 (BL158) v.20	<i>me man sæde þæt</i> → <i>me man sægde þæt</i>	* Low and narrow <i>g</i> inserted; cf. 102(BL105)v.11 and 130 (BL133)v.19 above.
156 (BL159) v.13	<i>þeoden under</i> → <i>þeoden he under</i>	Proof-reading stage superscript insertion in Scribe A's hand, with his mark of alteration beneath.
157 (BL160) r.5	<i>efne spa pide</i> → <i>efne spa side</i>	Clumsily corrected by partial erasure of bowl of <i>p</i> and overwriting to convert to <i>s</i> . Descender not erased, and neither is right hand edge of bowl, leaving rather ugly appearance of <i>snde</i> . Possible Scribe A mark of alteration beneath <i>i</i> .
157 (BL160) r.10	<i>drihtne heol</i> → <i>drihtne hol<sup>a</sup></i>	Apparently a vertical line, though with some stray parts, drawn through <i>e</i> to indicate its erasure, though see Kiernan's discussion. For a clearer use of a vertical line for erasure, cf. 163 (BL166)v.13.
157 (BL160) v.3	<i>st?apa helm</i> → <i>steapa helm<sup>b</sup></i>	Superscript <i>e</i> in Scribe A's hand written above a blotted out letter. Presumably a change made immediately as there is no mark of alteration; perhaps the scribe sought to overwrite the original letter as is his usual practice but found the result unsatisfactory.
158 (BL161) r.9	<i>ge hnæde helle</i> → <i>ge hnægde helle</i>	Low <i>g</i> , probably inserted, in Scribe A's hand; the least certainly corrective instance of this form; cf. 102(BL105)v.11.
158 (BL161) r.12	<i>gal mod gegan</i> → <i>galgmod gegan</i>	Low <i>g</i> inserted in Scribe A's hand; cf. 102(BL105)v.11.
158 (BL161) r.14	<i>sæl spæfun</i> → <i>sæld spæfun</i>	* <i>d</i> written slightly above the line with a very small bowl but normal length, vertical, ascender, in a different shade of ink and a thicker nib, but almost certainly Scribe A's hand.

158 (BL161) r.16–17	<i>se grȳr re læssa</i> → <i>se grȳ re læssa</i>	Single-letter erasure. Possibly dittography, or the scribe may have intended to write the full word on line 16, changed his mind, and felt that <i>e</i> could not stand alone on line 17.
158 (BL161) r.19	<i>þone heoru</i> → <i>þon̄ heoru</i>	Orchard sees a minim error, and records <i>þone</i> → <i>þonne</i> . It is not possible to know when the abbreviation mark was added, but it is higher than usual for Scribe A and not one of his usual two shapes; it seems most likely to me that <i>e</i> has been erased and a tilde added.
158 (BL161) r.19	<i>bunden hamere</i> → <i>bunden hamere<sup>c</sup></i>	Careful erasure of the second minim, leaving only a small part of the join between minims; cf. 97(99) (BL100)v.18.
158 (BL161) v.14	<i>maþðum . gife</i> → <i>maþðum gife .</i>	Point deleted and probably one added, as it is larger and different in shape from Scribe A's usual point (of which there are four other instance on this side).
158 (BL161) v.15	<i>pearð on heorote</i> → <i>pearð in heorote</i>	Superscript <i>i</i> inserted, with mark of alteration beneath and no attempt made to erase <i>o</i> . Universally regarded as by Scribe B, though I am not certain; cf. his superscript <i>i</i> at 147 (BL150) r.11, and Scribe A's mark of alteration (though cf. 160 (BL163)v.14), superscript insertion, and lack of deletion at e.g. 153 (BL156)v.5.
158 (BL161) v.17	<i>geþordun inpicun</i> → <i>geþorden inpicun</i>	<i>u</i> converted to <i>e</i> by overwriting, probably immediately.
159 (BL162) v.14	<i>pelhpȳlcra pilna</i> → <i>pelhpȳlca pilna</i>	Mark of omission above <i>r</i> , which is certainly not Scribe A; it is also unlike Scribe B's usual marks for erasure though it is similar to his abbreviation mark to indicate <i>-us</i> should follow <i>holofern</i> on (BL202)r.10 of <i>Judith</i> : see Chapter 5, p. 219 and Figure 53.
160 (BL163) r.17	<i>pille hafelu</i> → <i>pille hafelan</i>	* The peculiar shape of the second <i>a</i> in <i>hafelan</i> indicates an initial miswriting and emendation by Scribe A. The <i>e</i> may also be written over an erasure.

## Gathering 9

160 (BL163) r.17	<i>hafelan nis</i> → <i>hafelan nis</i> <sup>d</sup>	Scribe B's mark of insertion, with nothing added. Probably text was missing from the exemplar. See Chapter 5 pp. 220–221 and Figure 54.
160 (BL163) v.2	<i>þu findaan miht</i> → <i>þu findan miht</i>	Dittography corrected by erasure.
160 (BL163) v.12	<i>driht gumen unlif</i> → <i>driht guman unlif</i>	Superscript <i>a</i> in Scribe A's hand with his mark of alteration beneath <i>n</i> ; no attempt made to erase <i>e</i> .
160 (BL163) v.14	<i>magan gan sceā</i> → <i>magan gang sceā</i>	Superscript <i>g</i> in Scribe B's hand, with mark of alteration beneath that looks more like Scribe A's mark of alteration; cf. 158 (BL161)v.15.
161 (BL164) r.8	<i>eode þa æþalinga</i> → <i>eode þa æþelinga</i>	* Half-written <i>a</i> (bowl but not tail drawn in) converted to higher <i>e</i> than usual by overwriting; change must have been made immediately.
161 (BL164) v.2	<i>fe þa eal geseah</i> → <i>fe þa eal gesæt</i>	Superscript <i>æt</i> in Scribe A's hand, with his mark of insertion beneath and <i>eah</i> crossed out with a single horizontal line.
161 (BL164) v.13	<i>hearde geȝðnearpod</i> → <i>hearde ge nearpod</i>	Presumably dittography for <i>onȝðum</i> in line above, though hard to see why. Deleted letters erased and supplied by Kiernan from UV.
162 (BL165) v.11	<i>hond gellum gif</i> → <i>hond gesellum gif</i>	Superscript addition in Scribe A's hand with his mark of alteration beneath.

- a This is Orchard's reading, who sees the word needed as being *hold*; Kiernan suggests *heol* → *hleō*, with the metathesis indicated by the vertical line. This seems an excessively subtle reading of what the scribe has written although the correction here is puzzling and is perhaps worth considering further. See also Thomson, 'Manuscript Stability', pp. 69–71.
- b Orchard sees *steappa* → *steapa*, but I do not understand why.
- c Kiernan suggests from UV evidence that the scribe may have erased a stray stroke rather than a full minim of an original *m*.
- d A mark for corrective insertion characteristic of Scribe B is between the two words. I have included this, but not Scribe A's use of points in a possibly similar manner in *Wonders* discussed in Chapter 4, pp. 171–172, as it is more certainly corrective action, though incomplete.

## Gathering 10

163 (BL166)v.12	<i>hylaces peap</i> → <i>hylaces pearp</i>	Superscript <i>r</i> added in Scribe A's hand. No mark of alteration visible so change may have been immediate, but ink shade is quite different so probably a proofing stage.
163 (BL166)v.13	<i>pundel mæg</i> → <i>pundel mæl</i>	Probably a dittographic error for <i>mæg</i> in line 12. Vertical line drawn through <i>g</i> and superscript <i>l</i> added. For the use of a vertical line, though in a different way, cf. 157 (BL160)r.10.
164 (BL167)r.1	<i>him togenes feng</i> → <i>him togeanes feng</i>	Superscript <i>a</i> in Scribe A's hand. No mark of alteration and same ink shade, so probably performed immediately.
164 (BL167)r.8	<i>sunu ecþeopes</i> → <i>sunu ecgþeopes</i>	Low tight <i>g</i> inserted after <i>c</i> . Scribe A seems to write <i>c</i> for <i>cg</i> comparatively often, though not in <i>ecge</i> line 7 here. <sup>a</sup>
164 (BL167)v.9	[ <i>a</i> ]nræd nes seo → [ <i>a</i> ]nræd . næs seo	Double correction, with point inserted between words and low <i>a</i> bowl added to convert <i>e</i> to <i>æ</i> ; cf. 119(111) (BL114)r.20.
165 (BL168)r.12	<i>pine drihte selfne</i> → <i>pine drihten selfne</i>	<i>n</i> added to the end of the word for omitted letter, lower and more roughly than surrounding text. Possibly not Scribe A's hand, given the flat top and lack of approach stroke, but the correction type is not consistent with Scribe B's changes.
165 (BL168)v.1	<i>ættren ellergæst</i> → <i>ættren ellorgæst</i>	* <i>e</i> converted by overwriting into a square <i>o</i> . Change probably made immediately.
165 (BL168)v.3	[ <i>æ</i> ]r æt sæce gebad → [ <i>æ</i> ]r æt sæcce gebad	Superscript <i>c</i> for omitted letter in Scribe A's hand, with no mark of alteration.
166 (BL169)v.6	[ <i>ha</i> ]tost heþo spata → [ <i>ha</i> ]tost heaþo spata	Omitted <i>a</i> inserted in superscript in Scribe A's hand with no mark of alteration.
167 (BL170)r.22	<i>peorðþan eal</i> → <i>peorþan eal<sup>b</sup></i>	I do not see the erasure here, which looks more like a scrape on the parchment to me, and the tongue of <i>r</i> is complete. But Kiernan suggests an erased <i>d</i> or the start of a <i>d</i> and Orchard suggests an erased <i>ð</i> .
167 (BL170)v.3	<i>gpeox he him</i> → <i>gepeox he him</i>	<i>e</i> omitted by haplography added in superscript in Scribe A's hand.

## Gathering 10

167 (BL170)v.10	<i>him onferþe</i> → <i>him onferhþe</i>	Faint superscript <i>h</i> for omitted letter in Scribe B's hand with his mark of insertion.
167 (BL170)v.10	<i>greop brost</i> → <i>greop breost</i>	Superscript <i>e</i> for omitted letter in Scribe A's hand.
167 (BL170)v.21	<i>eþle eorþan</i>   <i>pýnne</i> → <i>eþle eorþan</i>   <i>pýnne</i>	* Originally written <i>p</i> , overwritten to convert to <i>þ</i> with a shortened descender. Scribe may have started to write <i>pýnne</i> , the next word; <i>an</i> may also be written over an erasure.
168 (BL171)r.3	<i>his snýttrum ende</i> → <i>his unsnýttrum ende</i>	Superscript insertion of meaningful omission in Scribe A's hand. Probable mark of alteration precedes <i>s</i> .
168 (BL171)v.2	<i>on ende</i>   <i>ende stæf</i> → <i>on ende</i>   <i>stæf</i>	Dittographic error, corrected by erasure. Erasure now hidden under frame, but photographed by Kiernan.
168 (BL171)v.3	<i>fealleðfeh oþer</i> → <i>fealleðfehð oþer</i>	Superscript <i>ð</i> for the omitted letter in Scribe B's hand, with his mark of insertion beneath.
168 (BL171)v.13	<i>bearhtm forsitet</i> 7 → <i>bearhtm forsited</i> 7	* Low <i>t</i> fairly smoothly overwritten to convert to <i>ð</i> ; error probably dittographic following previous <i>t</i> and likely corrected immediately.
168 (BL171)v.21	<i>cpom gýr æfter</i> → <i>cpom gýrn æfter</i>	Superscript <i>n</i> in Scribe A's hand with his mark of alteration beneath, indicating proof-reading stage.
169 (BL172)r.12	<i>helm gespea?c</i> → <i>helm gespearc</i>	Erased letter beneath <i>r</i> ; possibly just the ascender has been erased suggesting it could be <i>þ</i> , but this does not make the error more explicable. Probably corrected immediately.
169 (BL172)r.12	<i>deorc ofer drytt<sup>c</sup></i> → <i>deorc ofer dryht</i>	Probable <i>t</i> , which would be a dittographic error, overwritten by <i>h</i> .
169 (BL172)r.19	<i>þý dogor heapo</i> → <i>þý dogore heapo</i>	Rather faint <i>e</i> written on the line in Scribe B's hand; perhaps written at same time as 167 (BL170)v.10.
169 (BL172)v.11	<i>æþeling to to ýppan</i> → <i>æþeling to ýppan</i>	Dittography, with first form erased.
169 (BL172)v.18	<i>pillū be perede</i> → <i>pillū be penede</i>	<i>r</i> written in error, though I cannot see why. Descender erased and minim added to convert to <i>n</i> .



170 (BL173)r.5	<i>pac geata</i> → <i>pat geata</i>	<i>c</i> overwritten rather faintly to convert to <i>t</i> . <sup>d</sup> There may be a further correction as the <i>ea</i> ligature in <i>geata</i> is rather messy, but I cannot make anything out clearly.
170 (BL173)r.19	<i>gif p geganged</i> → <i>gif þ geganged</i>	<i>p</i> overwritten to convert to <i>þ</i> . Probably a eye-skip from <i>piþ pord-</i> in the line above.
170 (BL173)v.11	<i>bæð sceall hring</i> → <i>bæð sceal hring</i>	Dittography; second <i>l</i> almost fully erased.
170 (BL173)v.20	<i>betstan 7 b heal se</i> → <i>betstan 7 be heal se</i>	Superscript <i>e</i> with extended tongue written in Scribe A's hand with his mark of alteration beneath.

- a Kiernan suggests that the added *g* is in a later hand, perhaps that of Scribe B, but it looks like Scribe A to me; cf. the frequently inserted *g* form as at 102(BL105)v.11 and elsewhere, often after *æ*; for instances inserted not after *æ*, see 158 (BL161)r.9 & 12.
- b I cannot see the erasure here: it may be just a scrape on the parchment which has disturbed some ink from *þ*.
- c Orchard sees the *h* as inserted into *dryt*, but there is certainly a letter underlying *h* which was written originally.
- d Orchard records this as Scribe A's correction, but from the ink shade and shape that seems unlikely to me.

### Gathering 11

171 (BL174) r.8–9	<i>h[re] mi sæ</i> → <i>h[re] mig sæ</i>	Omitted <i>g</i> inserted with a thicker pen but in Scribe A's hand.
171 (BL174)v.4	<i>sægeap naia hladen</i> → <i>sægeap naca hladen</i>	* Erasure and overwriting; the erased letter is not certainly <i>i</i> and this does not make it any more explicable.
171 (BL174)v.17	<i>stefne ofer</i> → <i>stefna ofer</i>	Vertical line drawn through <i>e</i> and <i>a</i> written above in Scribe A's hand, though with a high final stroke not entirely like his, and closer to that of 171 (BL174)v.20, below.
171 (BL174)v.20	<i>hrepe pæs æt</i> → <i>hræpe pæs æt</i>	Superscript <i>a</i> , teardrop shaped but with a heavy pen and left-leaning aspect: not Scribe A's hand and probably Scribe B's. Mark of insertion is a short straight line, not as angled as Scribe B's usual mark. Possibly a third hand, but likely Scribe B's.
172 (BL175)v.3	<i>þ hit sceaðen mæl</i> → <i>þ hit sceaden mæl</i>	Cross-piece carefully erased.

## Scribe B's Corrections

### *Corrections to Scribe A (Included above in Bold)*<sup>2</sup>

#### Gathering 5

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132 (BL134)r.13 *scýppen* → *scýppend*

133 (BL135)r.20 *beortre* → *beorhtre*

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#### Gathering 6

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140 (BL142)v.14 *dol scaðan* → *dol sceaðan*

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#### Gathering 7

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142 (BL144)r.13 *o* → *on*

144 (BL146)r.15 *pealhþeo* → *pealhþeop*

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#### Gathering 8

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147 (BL150)r.11 *ængum* → *ænigum*

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#### Gathering 9

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158 (BL161)v.15 *on* → *in*

159 (BL162)v.14 *pelhpýlcra pilna* → *pelhpýlca pilna*

160 (BL163)r.17 *hafelan* → *no change*

160 (BL163)v.14 *gan* → *gang*

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#### Gathering 10

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167 (BL170)v.10 *ferþe* → *ferhþe*

168 (BL171)v.3 *feh* → *fehð*

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<sup>2</sup> See also notes to individual corrections above and Chapter 5, pp. 219–221. In this list I have taken an inclusive approach; it is far from always certain when corrections are by Scribe B.

169 (BL172)r.19 *dogor* → *dogore*

170 (BL173)r.5 *pac* → *pat*

### Gathering 11

171 (BL174)v.20 *hrepe* → *hrape*

### *Beowulf*

#### Gathering 11

172 (BL175)v.8	<i>on hoh nod</i> → <i>on hohsnod</i>	High s inserted in Scribe B's hand for omitted letter.
173 (BL176)v.2	<i>cȳðe holde</i> → <i>cȳðe holdne</i>	First <i>e</i> overwritten to correct dittography. Concealed letter identified by Kiernan.
173 (BL176)v.2	<i>ge geette meaglum</i> → <i>ge grette meaglum</i>	Dittography of <i>ge ge</i> corrected by overwriting <i>e</i> with <i>r</i> and erasing some stray lines.
173 (BL176)v.4	<i>þæt reced</i> → <i>þæt side ræced</i>	Superscript insertion of omitted word, with Scribe B's mark of insertion and all in a lighter shade of ink, so must have been at a separate stage from writing. Addition must be from the exemplar; see Chapter 5 pp. 221–222. A caudata appears to (unnecessarily) convert <i>e</i> to <i>æ</i> (though cf. Kiernan, who sees this but does not think it has this meaning; cf. 173 (BL176)v.11) and Chapter 5 pp. 223–225.
173 (BL176)v.5	<i>bær hæðnū to</i> → <i>bær hæñū to</i>	Letter erased, which Kiernan identifies as ð. I cannot see the reason for this error.
173 (BL176) v.11	<i>sacce secean</i> → <i>sæcce secean</i>	Caudata shape beneath <i>a</i> and inserted <i>e</i> shape both convert <i>a</i> to <i>æ</i> . The combination is not necessary, but both were probably performed by Scribe B, though at different times to judge by the ink shade. Cf. line 4 with an identical caudata which is also unnecessary.
173 (BL176) v.18–19	<i>secge</i>   <i>þasðe ic</i> → <i>secge</i>   <i>þæsðe ic</i>	* <i>a</i> converted to <i>æ</i> by squeezed in <i>e</i> .

## Gathering 11

174 (BL177)r.5	<i>sige[scȳl]   dungū → sigescȳl   dingū</i>	Careful erasure of bottom and right hand stroke of <i>u</i> to produce <i>i</i> .
174 (BL177)v.8	<i>he miððȳ → he mid ðȳ</i>	Dittographic error corrected by careful erasure of most of the cross piece for the first ð.
175 (BL178)v.2	<i>að speorð eorla → að speord eorla</i>	Probable dittography to induce additional ð; corrected by partial erasure of crosspiece.
176 (BL179)r.6–7	<i>polde manigra   manigra → polde   manigra</i>	Dittography across the line break; first copy erased.
176 (BL179)r.17	<i>me þone næl → me þone pæl</i>	* <i>n</i> overwritten to produce a fairly square <i>p</i> . There may have been an error in the production of the <i>a</i> shape too, but that is less certain.
176 (BL179)v.14	<i>pif hunhyre hyre → pif unhyre hyre</i>	Probable dittography corrected by single-letter erasure.
176 (BL179)v.19	<i>[le]ode . bronde . bronde → [le]ode . . bronde</i>	Dittography corrected by erasure. Additional point not erased. Its presence possibly indicates that points were copied in relation to the word they preceded rather than what they followed, though it may have been added after the erasure; it is a little smaller than those around it.
176(BL179)v.20	<i>[n]e on bel hlædan → [n]e on bæł hladan</i>	Caudata converts <i>e</i> to <i>æ</i> , which Kiernan sees but does not give meaning to it as it is redundant; cf. 173 (BL176)v.4 & 11 above, both of which also use the paler shade of ink applied here so were presumably all done at the same time. Second correction here is a careful erasure of the <i>e</i> compartment in <i>æ</i> to leave the correct reading. Zupitza suggested initial <i>h</i> was corrected from <i>b</i> , and the foot of the letter is a little misshapen, but I follow Kiernan here: there is no erasure.
177 (BL180)r.9	<i>þeic pide cuð → þeis pide cuð</i>	Conversion of probably dittographic <i>ic</i> , for that word in the previous line, to <i>is</i> by overwriting and making <i>c</i> into round <i>s</i> .

177 (BL180) v.13	<i>leod scȳinunga</i> → <i>leod scȳldunga</i>	Corrected by overwriting, leaving a slight part of the approach stroke to <i>i</i> and a very untidy <i>d</i> shape. Perhaps a dittographic error from <i>cȳning</i> at the end of the previous line, or for <i>sinū</i> in line beneath. <sup>a</sup>
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- a Neidorf includes this as one of many examples of a lack of familiarity with heroic terminology, which in this instance at least is surely not correct, 'Scribal Errors', p. 259.

### Gathering 12

179 (BL182) r.9	<i>since fac ne</i> → <i>since fah ne</i>	Superscript <i>h</i> written above erroneous <i>c</i> , which has not been erased. No mark of insertion or alteration visible, though the side is badly damaged.
179 (BL182) v.1	Line and a half erased.	* As discussed in Chapter 5 pp. 232–239, in this complex folio it seems likely to me that there were a number of errors made and corrected, before later readers worked to clarify the text making it yet more difficult to read. Other readers have of course identified the issues here, but have not clarified the almost certain presence of at least one dittography with erasure probably by Scribe B in this top line.
180 (BL183) v.8	<i>hlaforð sine</i> → <i>hlaforð sinne</i>	Omitted <i>n</i> inserted as superscript with mark of insertion, both in Scribe B's hand and with a lighter shade of ink so probably at a proof-reading stage.
180 (BL183) v.18	<i>hȳlðo gehealden hord</i> → <i>hȳlðo gehealdeþ hord</i>	Perhaps a grammatical error? Corrected by overwriting <i>n</i> with <i>þ</i> , probably immediately, leaving an ugly ligature with <i>e</i> .
181 (BL184) r.14–15	<i>egeslic leodū</i>   <i>leodū</i> → <i>egeslic</i>   <i>leodū</i>	Probable dittography, with the first form fully erased; Kiernan suggests <i>leod</i> as the erased word.
181 (BL184) v.7	<i>gegeupode piges</i> → <i>getrupode piges</i>	Dittography, with <i>ge</i> changed by overwriting and perhaps erasure (damage to margin makes it hard to identify corrective phases). Most likely made immediately; i.e. Scribe B did not write <i>gegeupode</i> but <i>gege</i> and corrected to <i>getr</i> before completing the word.

## Gathering 12

182 (BL185) r.3-4	<i>ende geb   bidan</i> → <i>ende ge   bidan</i>	Erasure of dittography at the end of a manuscript line. I cannot see this as it is covered by the paper frame, but Orchard notes it, presumably from UV images.
182 (BL185) v.16	<i>oððæt hes yldra</i> → <i>oððæt he yldra</i>	Erasure of a straight stroke is clear, but I cannot see the erased letter, which Kiernan identifies. Without his note, I would assume an erased <i>l</i> in dittographic error for <i>helm</i> in line 19 (which would be a unusually large eye-skip). Orchard sees dittographic <i>he he</i> , but I do not think this likely based on the spacing. The <i>y</i> is compressed in and not dotted, which may be a corrective feature (cf. 103(BL106)v.17), so perhaps there was a larger error here which I am unable to recover.
182 (BL185) v.19	<i>hý forgalden helm</i> → <i>hý forhealden helm</i>	A curious error for which I cannot account, especially as it interferes with the alliteration. Probably corrected immediately, with tail of <i>g</i> erased and body overwritten to produce <i>e</i> and superscript <i>h</i> with no mark of insertion. Orchard and Kiernan read <i>al</i> as originally written <i>el</i> , which is possible though if this is the case the overwriting was very smooth.
183 (BL186) r.17	<i>pið þū pýme</i> → <i>pið þū pýrme</i>	Immediate correction of omitted letter, with <i>r</i> written over <i>m</i> ; i.e. the scribe only wrote <i>pým</i> before correcting himself. Identified by Kiernan; I cannot see this at all.
184 (BL187) r.8	<i>ýldestan ungefelice</i> → <i>ýldestan ungedefelice</i>	Immediate correction of haplography, with the first stroke of <i>f</i> erased and the rest of the word written after the gap; i.e. the scribe wrote <i>unge</i> and then began to write <i>f</i> before correcting himself.
184 (BL187) r.19	<i>hrefne to hrore</i> → <i>hrefne to hroðre</i>	Superscript <i>ð</i> for omitted letter with no mark of insertion. Very small letter, and more bilinear than the scribe's usual form, though this may be due to the tail of <i>g</i> above (compare superscript <i>ð</i> at 189a(197) (BL192)r.4). The letter is in a lighter ink,

which usually indicates Scribe B's proofing stage so the lack of insertion mark and different form may indicate another hand here. Perhaps cf. the unnecessary caudata corrections at e.g. 173 (BL 176)v.4 & 11 and see also Chapter 5 pp. 223–225 and Figure 55.

184 (BL187) v.16	<i>heaðo ric hatian</i> → <i>heaðo rinc hatian</i>	Superscript <i>n</i> for omitted letter with mark of insertion, both in a in lighter shade of ink.
185 (BL188) v.2	<i>polde an on</i> → <i>polde ana on</i>	Superscript <i>a</i> with insertion mark for omitted letter. <i>a</i> is interestingly formed, with the first stroke a little too extravagant, so its terminus goes through the downstroke and a longer tail than usual. Much lower first stroke also gives the letter a stronger teardrop aspect than is usual for Scribe B.
186 (BL189) r.3	<i>dýde ac ðær heaðu</i> → <i>dýde ac ic ðær heaðu</i>	Omitted word written in superscript above <i>ac</i> with point before it and double insertion mark to indicate where it should go; presumably placed there to avoid the limited space between the descender from <i>p</i> above and ascender from <i>ð</i> below, but in fact the <i>c</i> of <i>ic</i> ends on the descender of <i>p</i> . Contrast approach here with 184 (BL187) r.19 above.
186 (BL189) v.21	<i>ecgum un   gleap</i> → <i>ecgum un   glap</i>	A very faded word but the <i>e</i> appears to have been erased as it is more fully lost than the rest of the word. Kiernan does not see this correction, though Orchard and the editors of Klaeber's 'Beowulf' do, and it seems probable to me. See also Fulk, 'Contested Readings'.
187 (BL190) r.3	<i>he on seapum</i> → <i>he on searpum</i>	Omitted letter inserted in superscript with mark of insertion.
187 (BL190) r.13	<i>hefde bysigū</i> → <i>hæfde bysigū</i>	Unusual conversion of <i>e</i> to <i>æ</i> by writing another <i>e</i> over it, leaving a line across the middle of what is now the bowl of <i>a</i> . Change probably made immediately, to judge by spacing, and not in line with proof-reading practice for this kind of correction.

## Gathering 12

187 (BL190) r.14	<i>weard æfter heaðu</i> → <i>weard æfter heaðu</i>	Erroneous cross-piece mostly erased.
187 (BL190) v.2	<i>þ ða aglægean hý</i> → <i>þ ða aglæcean hý</i>	Probably haplography, with the tail of <i>g</i> erased but the first two strokes left. Cf. 192 (BL196)v.18.
188 (BL191) v.13	<i>nu is se cumen</i> → <i>nu is se dæg cumen</i>	Omitted word written in superscript above the gap, and followed by a point, with three marks of insertion presumably for the three letters. Letter-forms, especially <i>æ</i> , are not entirely usual for Scribe B, probably due to the limited space available; cf. 184 (BL187) r.19. There may be a second correction here (not included in counts and not suggested by anyone else), with <i>e</i> in <i>cumen</i> possibly converted from initially written <i>a</i> .
188 (BL191) v.19	<i>gyfan gled faðmie</i> → <i>gyfan gled fæðmicæ</i>	Two corrections here: <i>a</i> converted to <i>æ</i> by adding an <i>e</i> shape which consequently interferes with <i>ð</i> . Caudata shape under terminal <i>-e</i> converts this to <i>æ</i> as well, though unnecessarily. Kiernan sees this hook but regards it as not a correction. Cf. 173 (BL176)v.4 and other instances above. Kiernan does not note the conversion of <i>a</i> ; while Orchard notes this but not the caudata.

## Gathering 13

189a(197) (BL192)r.4	<i>urū speord</i> 7 → <i>urū sceal speord</i> 7	Omitted word added in margin with points to either side. Mark of insertion and two further points plus superscript <i>ð</i> indicate site for insertion.
189a(197) (BL192)r.5	<i>þurh þone pæltræc</i> → <i>þurh þone pælrec</i>	Erroneous letter corrected by erasure of the bowl of <i>a</i> . Tongue of <i>r</i> then extended to attempt to join the two letters. <sup>a</sup>
189a(197) (BL192)r.13	<i>fýr pýrmū</i> → <i>fýr pýlmū</i>	Dittographic error of repeating <i>ýr</i> from previous word corrected by erasing descender and overwriting <i>l</i> .
189a(197) (BL192)v.19	<i>gepeold his his</i> → <i>gepeold his</i>	Dittographic error corrected by erasing second form.



189 (BL193)r.19	<i>dogor gerime deað</i> → <i>dogor gerimes deað</i>	Omitted <i>s</i> added a little shakily over the tongue of <i>e</i> . Perhaps the error is attributable to morphology, as Orchard suggests.
189 (BL193)v.16	<i>leod scipe þoñe</i> → <i>leod scipe þone</i>	I cannot see this, but under UV Kiernan has identified a tilde erased over <i>n</i> , originally making it <i>þonne</i> . Perhaps a form of dittography as Orchard suggests.
190 (BL194)r.18	<i>beorhtost bil</i> → <i>beorhtost bill</i>	Haplography, with the second <i>l</i> added over the tongue of the first and at a slight angle; perhaps at the same time as the similar added <i>s</i> on 189 (BL193)r.19.
190 (BL194) r.20–21	<i>hatne for   hogode</i> → <i>hatne for   horde</i>	A puzzling error, to misread <i>-r-</i> as <i>-go-</i> , for which I cannot see any contextual reason. The <i>g</i> is erased, with <i>o</i> overwritten for <i>r</i> .
190 (BL194)v.4	<i>gemete in ðā pong</i> → <i>gemette in ðā pong</i>	Haplography, with the correction performed immediately; i.e. the scribe wrote <i>gemet</i> and started to write the final <i>e</i> before realising his mistake and correcting.
190 (BL194)v.10	<i>gold sceapode</i> → <i>gold sceapode</i>	Careful alteration of what was presumably a letter misread from the exemplar. The base of the bowl of <i>p</i> has not been erased, which is odd as this leaves the new reading less clear than it may have been and Scribe B often performs micro-erasures. Ink used for correction is also quite dark; this may have been made by another hand at a later stage.
192 (BL196)v.2	<i>eoprū cýnne</i> → <i>eoprū cynne</i>	A puzzling erasure of correct text, rewritten above in superscript and perhaps not by Scribe B (N.B. the undotted <i>y</i> ). Kiernan suggests that this may have happened after the damage visible on lines 3–6, perhaps to improve legibility. Cf. Chapter 5 pp. 237–238, Figure 55, and Figure 59.
192 (BL196)v.6	<i>leasan dæl deað</i> → <i>leasan dæd deað</i>	<i>d</i> is certainly added, and a dot beneath <i>l</i> presumably deletes it, which is more usual practice for Scribe A than B. An additional dot above <i>æ</i> may be part of the corrective effort. It is odd that <i>l</i> cuts across the tongue of <i>e</i> , suggesting that it may have been an addition: perhaps an initial attempt to correct?

## Gathering 13

192 (BL196)v.7	<i>þonne epittlif</i> → <i>þonne edpittlif</i>	Omitted letter added in faint and scratchy superscript, dotted to either side, with an equally faint mark of insertion beneath.
192 (BL196)v.16	<i>pæl bennū s</i> → <i>pæl reste</i>	Eye-skip ( <i>bennū</i> comes at the end of the next line) corrected by erasure, leaving a large gap, with <i>r</i> of <i>reste</i> written over <i>s</i> , which must have been the start of writing <i>seoc</i> (now at the start of line 18).
192 (BL196)v.18	<i>on ðā aglægean</i> → <i>on ðā aglæcean</i>	<i>g</i> mostly erased and overwritten as <i>c</i> , probably corrected immediately. Cf. 187 (BL190)v.2, which also has an erroneous <i>g</i> in this position.
193 (BL197)r.6	<i>hýne het pære</i> → <i>hýne het pare</i>	Top-stroke of <i>e</i> carefully erased to leave <i>a</i> .
193 (BL197)r.10	<i>mere pio ingannilts</i> → <i>mere pio ingasmilts</i>	High <i>s</i> written over first minim. See Chapter 5, pp. 218–219 and Figure 52 for Scribe B's difficulty with this word.
193 (BL197)r.11	<i>treope pihte ac</i> → <i>treope pihte ne</i> <i>pene ac</i>	Omitted words written in superscript with mark of insertion, in Scribe B's hand but in a browner ink so at a proof-reading stage.
193 (BL197)v.9	<i>folc mid hī fæhðe</i> → <i>folc mid hī fæhðe</i>	Omitted <i>h</i> in superscript above <i>æ</i> , with mark of insertion.
193 (BL197) v.19–20	<i>on   gen þio ecgū</i> → <i>on   gen þiop ecgū</i>	Omitted <i>p</i> added in a lighter ink, and comparatively high up. Based on placement and shape, it is plausible (as Neidorf suggests) that this was by another hand. <sup>b</sup> See also Chapter 5 pp. 223–225 and Figure 55.
194 (BL198)v.3	<i>mid ofer maðma</i> → <i>mid ofer maðmu</i>	Top of <i>a</i> erased to leave <i>u</i> ; presumably intended to be converted to <i>ū</i> , which Orchard records as the correction, but I do not see a tilde or any attempt to draw one.
194 (BL198)v.15	<i>scipe emde me is</i> → <i>scipe efnde me is</i>	Mistakenly written <i>m</i> is overwritten with a Caroline <i>f</i> , although there may also have been an attempt to draw an insular <i>f</i> to judge by the darker horizontal mark which would have been level with the top of insular <i>f</i> and seems to me to cross the top of originally drawn <i>m</i> .

195 (BL199)r.2	<i>ne mæð scýne</i> → <i>ne mægð scýne</i>	Low tight <i>g</i> drawn in for omitted letter. It is odd that Scribe B does not follow his usual practice and use superscript here; presumably made immediately.
196 (BL200)v.6	<i>þenden he þurh</i> → <i>þenden he burh</i>	Descender carefully erased.
196 (BL200)v.19	<i>stren gebæded</i> → <i>strengū gebæded</i>	Omitted letters inserted in superscript, with a single mark of insertion (tail of <i>u</i> looks like a second).
198 (BL201)r.9	<i>frætpa hýrde</i> <i>þ ýrde þ</i> → <i>frætpa hýrde þ</i>	Partial dittography corrected by deletion. A strange error, and a surprising type of correction given the pressing need for space on this folio, which was probably made immediately as the error is so odd. Deleted letters are not visible but are supplied by Kiernan from UV.
198 (BL201)r.11	<i>hilde to to hrones</i> → <i>hilde to hrones</i>	Dittography corrected by deletion of the first form. Deleted word is not visible but is supplied by Kiernan.

- a I am following Kiernan here. Orchard sees *i* corrected to *e* which is possible but leaves strange spacing between *r* and original *ic*, and the shadow of the bowl of *a* does seem visible to me.
- b 'Scribal Errors for Proper Names', p. 269.

## *Judith*

### Gathering 14

199 (BL202)v.7	<i>holofe nus gold</i> → <i>holoferus gold</i>	* Originally omitted <i>r</i> written over the tail of <i>e</i> and extended to ligature with <i>n</i> . Cf. 192 (BL196)v.6 for crossing the tail of <i>e</i> with an inserted letter and 189a(197) (BL192) r.5 for extended <i>r</i> . There may be an erasure here, but I think not.
199 (BL202)v.11	<i>7 ýlede gehýran</i> → <i>7gýlede gehýran</i>	* This is not certain, but probable. <i>g</i> is squeezed into the available space, and thereby interferes with <i>ý</i> .
199 (BL202)v.19	<i>gumena baldor</i> → <i>gumena . aldor</i>	Presumably the wrong word written in error: <i>baldor</i> appears <i>Judith</i> line 9, 199 (BL202)r.12. Possibly indicates writing to dictation rather than copying. <sup>a</sup>

## Gathering 14

200 (BL203)r.20	<i>on reste gebrohten</i> → <i>on reste gebrohton</i>	Erroneous <i>e</i> is underdotted with a superscript <i>o</i> .
200 (BL203)v.13	<i>æd?e binnan</i> → <i>ædre binnan</i>	* There is a certainly scribal scribble above the <i>r</i> of <i>ædre</i> . Possibly the scribe began writing another letter but immediately realised his mistake?
201 (BL204)r.20	<i>ge unne minra</i> → <i>ge unne me minra</i>	Omitted <i>me</i> inserted in superscript, with two marks of insertion beneath.
202 (BL205)v.10	<i>toðam gate</i> → <i>toðam peal gate</i>	Omitted <i>peal</i> inserted in superscript, with two marks of insertion beneath. Text and marks are in a lighter, browner, shade.
202 (BL205)v.11	<i>pearde heordon</i> → <i>pearde heoldon</i>	Omitted <i>l</i> written over the last stroke of <i>r</i> , leaving the descender undeleted and making this a little hard to read as seems to be usual practice in <i>Judith</i> ; see line 18 and 203(BL206)v.17.
202 (BL205)v.18	<i>in forleten þurh</i> → <i>in forlæton þurh</i>	<i>e</i> is corrected by caudata, like those frequently used – often unnecessarily – in Scribe B's part of <i>Beowulf</i> , e.g. 173 (BL176) v.4 & 11. Second <i>o</i> changed from <i>e</i> by overwriting; again (as on line 11), the remains of <i>e</i> are not erased.
203(BL206)v.17	<i>fæge fuū garas</i> → <i>fæge frū garas</i>	Probably dittographic error corrected immediately by overwriting. No erasure of <i>u</i> ; cf. 202 (BL205)v.11.
205 (BL208)v.6	<i>his gæld gifan</i> → <i>his gold gifan</i>	* Probable <i>æ</i> corrected by erasure of <i>e</i> , although parts remain crossing <i>l</i> . Apparently no attempt made to smooth the shape into a rounded form; it now looks most like <i>a</i> without a tail.
205 (BL208)v.17	<i>mægen ecen</i> → <i>mægen eacen</i>	Omitted <i>a</i> inserted in superscript with a mark of insertion beneath.
206 (BL209)r.2	<i>ebrea ġpweorðod</i> → <i>ebrea . sigore</i> <i>ġpweorðod</i>	Omitted word written superscript, with point after <i>ebrea</i> possibly as part of the insertion mark rather than as a point, or possibly originally written. Triple insertion mark beneath the point.

206 (BL209)v.111 *eorlas æc rofe* →  
*eorlas æsc rofe*

\* Given the pressure on space here, this may not be a correction, but *æ* and *s* cross, which is not usual, and it seems likely that *s* was an insertion.

- a The point that remains may simply be an accidentally left part of *b*. Neither Dobbie (*‘Beowulf’ and ‘Judith’*) nor Griffith (*Judith*) print a point in this position in line 32b, and Griffiths suggests that *b* has been “incompletely erased” in his textual notes, p. 97.

## Readers' Annotations to the Nowell Codex

The body of this volume is concerned with the work of the scribes, but there are a number of sites where additions have been made, probably by other hands. Many have been discussed in the main text, where they relate to dating or other discussions. Some of these are very much later than the Anglo-Saxon production: Nowell's signature on what is now the first page; the various paginations on each recto; some catchwords probably made after the 1731 fire; underlining of names as part of the Cottonian attempt to classify the texts; the Renaissance re-copying of the last few lines of *Judith*; and the medieval transcriptions of a small part of *Wonders* on 99(95) (BL102)v and probably associated doodling on 98(100) (BL101)r. Others are likely to be near-contemporary with the scribes: the third correcting hand (if distinct from Scribe B); the touching up of Scribe B's hand on damaged folios; the addition of red ink to some letters at the start of *Alexander*.

There are, though, a number of additions which do not have a direct bearing on foregoing discussion and yet which are of interest to students of this manuscript. Some or all of these could, indeed, be by the scribes and draughtsmen themselves; there is no way of knowing with certainty and I briefly discuss any likelihood of attribution below. They are of differing levels of interest but all seem to me to suggest some form of engagement with the texts – hence my perhaps over-ambitious attribution to 'readers'. Two have been discussed before; the others are, to my knowledge, not previously published. They are arranged according to the order of their appearance in the codex:

- (a) the explicit to *Wonders* on 103 (BL106)v.19;
- (b) *f*-shaped marks on 111(119) (BL122)v.20, 112 (120) (BL123)v.12, and 117(109) (BL112)r.17;
- (c) drypoint sketches on 128 (BL131)r;
- (d) a marginal cross on 164 (BL167)v.18;
- (e) marginal designs on 202 (BL205).

### 103 (BL106)v.19: The *Explicit* to *Wonders*

As shown in Figure 75, there is a faded word in red ink at the end of 103 (BL106)v.19, which may have been written by Scribe A, by the colourist (if that was a different person), or by a later reader. Orchard reads *purhasa* and suggests that it may gloss *sigelpara*; Rypins, followed by Mittman and Kim, reads *pūrbasa*, and this seems to me

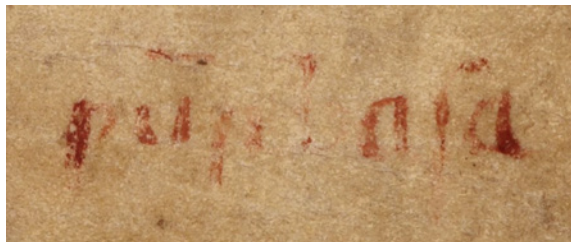


FIGURE 75  
 ?pūrbasa at the end of  
 Wonders, on 103 (BL106)v.19.  
 See also colour plate 15.  
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 A. XV.

to be the most likely reading.<sup>1</sup> There is certainly a bar across the *u*, and the fourth letter seems to have a curve at its base, indicating *b* rather than *h*. Either way, the word is obscure.

Malone suggests that the line over *u* could have been intended for the *r* instead, indicating (as it almost always does for Scribe A) an omitted *m*.<sup>2</sup> This would be in keeping with Scribe A's usual practice and, accepting it, Mittman and Kim rather ingeniously suggest emendation to *pūrmbaso*, a gloss for coccus or red dye.<sup>3</sup> This would most readily be understood as an instruction to the colourist from scribe or draughtsman, but they complicate it somewhat by assuming that the word is the work of a later reader, and arguing that "the red ink[...]proclaims a self-evidence that collapses signification."<sup>4</sup> Whatever the word is or means, it is unlikely to be a coincidence that it has been placed at the end of a text in which red becomes the dominant colour, and where the images are often difficult to decipher. It is also worth noting that the letters do not look entirely like those usually written by Scribe A. The serif on *b* is strong and wedged, the lobe of *p* is very low and pointed, and the terminal *a* is teardrop-shaped in execution but far more narrow than his usual aspect. He does sometimes form *wynn* in this way, but only when seeking to clearly distinguish it from *p*, as for instance on 106 (BL109)r.20. These differences may be the result of writing with a different pen, or even a brush used to apply ink to images. It is just conceivable that this is the hand of a primary colourist who is giving an obscure instruction to another.

1 Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, n. §32<sup>8</sup> p. 202; Rypins, *Three Prose Texts*, n. 17, p. 67; Mittman and Kim, *Inconceivable Beasts*, p. 56 and discussed pp. 161–163.

2 'Is *wūr* for *wuŕ* i.e. *wurm*?', *Nowell Codex*, p. 39. On the scribe's use of abbreviations, see Fulk et al., *Klaeber's 'Beowulf'*, p. xxx.

3 Alternative explanations are feasible but weak, focused on attempting to explain *basa*. Latin *carbasa* is used to gloss *segl* ("sail") which could perhaps have arisen from confusion of *sigel* on the final line here with *segl*. Bashan, the place of origin of the Amorite King Og, is called *Basane* in the *Old English Psalms*, which could perhaps locate the *Sigelwara* somewhere similar. Or it could abbreviate *basaltes*, the dark grey or black marble which comes from Ethiopia. On the whole, Mittman and Kim's solution, while not entirely satisfactory, is by far the best.

4 Mittman and Kim, *Inconceivable Beasts*, pp. 161–163.

111(119) (BL122)v.20, 112 (120) (BL123)v.12, and 117(109) (BL112)r.17:  
f-Shaped Marks

Not quite as resistant to interpretation and significantly more interesting are three *f*-like signs that appear in the text of *Alexander*, all shown in Figure 76. One is placed at the end of a page of text, just to the right of the final word at 111(119) (BL122)v.20. Another is on the following verso, in the middle of a line and almost superscript between a word and the succeeding *7 hie* on 112 (120) (BL123)v.12. The final instance occurs a gathering later, in the far left margin of a manuscript page at 117(109) (BL112)r.17. Rypins notes only the first two instances.<sup>5</sup> Presumably in desperation, he says that the first is the imprint of an erased *s* from 112(120) (BL123)r.19.<sup>6</sup> I can see no evidence of this erasure; that Rypins makes no such suggestion for the second sign perhaps suggests that he realised the inadequacy of the proposal.

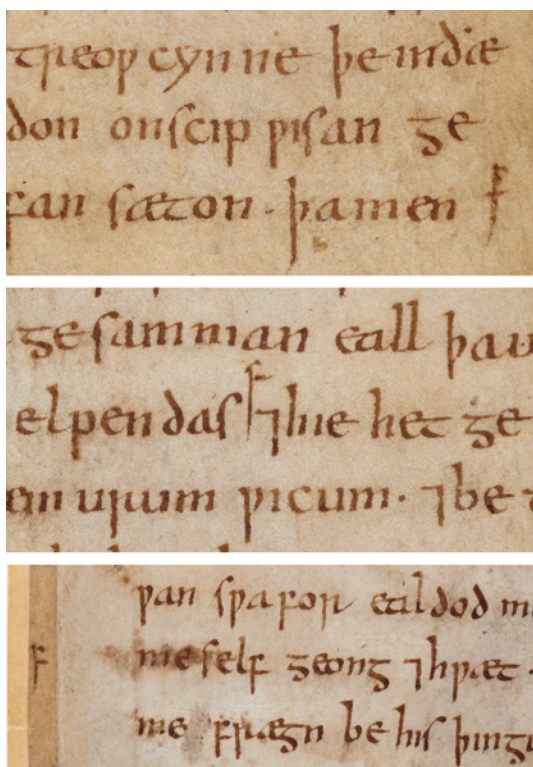


FIGURE 76  
f-like signs in *Alexander*: 111(119) (BL122)v.18–20; 112 (120) (BL123)v.11–13; and 117(109) (BL112)r.16–18.  
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<sup>5</sup> As extra-textual signs, Orchard does not note the *f*-like marks in his edition.

<sup>6</sup> Rypins, *Prose Texts*, n. 9 p. 17.



The letters may be scribal: the last sign is similar to Scribe A's *f*-shape; the second closer to Scribe B's usual letter-form; the first is less easy to place but of the two comes closer to Scribe A's. Each sign might, of course, date from almost any moment in the manuscript's history. Kiernan suggests scribal practice letters, showing improvement in form if read in reverse order.<sup>7</sup> But they bear no similarity to the placement or form of certain pen trials elsewhere in the manuscript and two are not particularly close to an occurrence of *f*.<sup>8</sup> That coming mid-line surely cannot be a rehearsal. Jim Hall suggests that they could be "scriptorium directions" of some manner;<sup>9</sup> given the variable placement, and confinement to these three sites in *Alexander* this seems unlikely. As he agrees with me that they are probably not all the work of the same hand, this reading becomes less probable.

In the context of my very tentative connection of Nowell with other productions in Archbishop Wulfstan's sphere of influence, it is curious to note that similar signs appear in Nero A. i. As shown in Figure 77, marginal *f* appears there on fols. 70r, 102r, 110r, and 120r; as shown in the same figure, a similar marginal *t* appears on fols. 103r, 105r, and 120r.<sup>10</sup> Unlike those in *Alexander*, in Nero A. i all are placed at the start of texts or text sections, but the *f*'s are in the work of three different scribes who may have produced three separate booklets, brought together as a composite volume shortly after

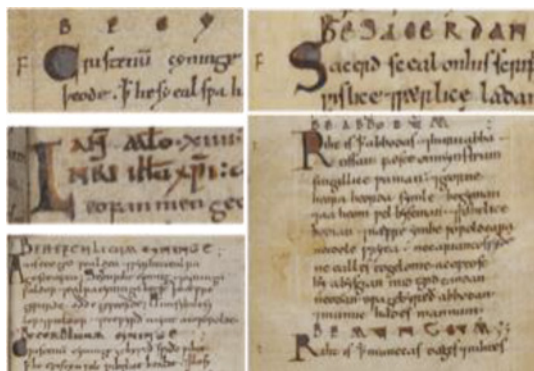


FIGURE 77  
l-r and top to bottom, marginal  
*f*-like signs in Nero A. i, fols. 70–177,  
on fols. 70r, 102r, 110r; marginal *t* on  
fols. 103r, 105r; marginal *f* and *t* on  
120r. See also colour plate 16.

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7 Pers. corr. 22/1/14.

8 An example of a pen trial by Scribe B can be found at the foot of 183 (BL186)r.

9 Pers. corr. 12/1/14.

10 The marginal *f* on 110r is mostly concealed by the facing verso in the *Digitised Manuscripts* images, but is clearly visible in Roberts, *Guide to Scripts*, §16, p. 77, and in Henry R. Loyn, ed., *A Wulfstan Manuscript Containing Institutes, Law and Homilies. British Museum Cotton Nero A. I.* EEMF 17 (Copenhagen, 1971). I am grateful to Jane Roberts, Jim Hall, Jon Wilcox, and Kevin Kiernan for seeking to help me understand these insertions.

completion.<sup>11</sup> I cannot discern any difference between the texts marked with an *f* and those with a *t*. The *f* is formed most like the third instance in *Alexander*, on the far left of 117(109) (BL112)r.17, which is itself closest to the form used by Scribe A. This is the lower image in Figure 76, with an instance of Scribe A's *f* visible on the right of that image at the end of *meself*. It is certainly not possible to connect the two manuscripts on these flimsy grounds; apart from anything else, a scribe cannot be attributed on the basis of a single letter. Further, I have not conducted a full study of Wulfstanian or indeed late Anglo-Saxon vernacular manuscripts, and it is probable that similar insertions are scattered elsewhere in the corpus; there is, for instance, a partly trimmed away insular minuscule *ef* in the upper margin of another Wulfstanian manuscript: Harley 55, fol. 2v. It is also important to bear in mind that the marks surely serve different functions, as those in Nero occur at the start of texts or sections with those in *Alexander* placed with much less obvious logic. I do not yet have a convincing explanation for these signs in either manuscript. However, given their infrequency and inconsistent placement I find them very unlikely to be mechanically related to, for instance, the length of a scribal stint; given their clarity and the consistent use of the same letter, they are not likely to be random. When written, they were written with a purpose, which should probably be connected with someone reading for meaning; it may be that this purpose is now utterly irrecoverable.<sup>12</sup> Focusing on those in Nowell it is, however, at the very least interesting that they all occur in parts of *Alexander* that can be connected with passages in *Beowulf* and seem likely to have been translated with reference to that text.<sup>13</sup>

The first two *f* shapes occur in §16 of the text.<sup>14</sup> This is mostly concerned with the discovery of a freshwater lake where the thirst of Alexander and his army could be slaked; Orchard notes the “general resemblance” of this scene to the monster-mere in *Beowulf*.<sup>15</sup> It is also one of several passages adjusted from the source in order, Orchard shows, to depict Alexander “in more selfish terms”.<sup>16</sup> The first mark occurs mid-sentence but at the end of a line and the end of a manuscript page, suggesting

- 
- 11 My scribes A, C, and D; Loyn scribes 3, 5, and 6; Ker hands 1, 3 and 4; Scragg nos. 506, 508, and 509. The *t*'s are in the work of the last two of these scribes.
  - 12 Cf. Stokes' definition of a “scribble” as “a short text which has little or no meaning either in itself or with reference to the manuscript”; perhaps if we understood these marks, they should instead be regarded as a form of gloss which he defines as text “incomplete in itself but has meaning when read alongside the lemma to which it refers”, *English Vernacular Minuscule* p. 177 with scribbles discussed pp. 177–184.
  - 13 In Orchard, *Companion*, pp. 25–39.
  - 14 Sectional divisions used here are those in Orchard *Pride and Prodigies*. Fulk, ‘*Beowulf*’ *Manuscript* prints the text without sectional divisions, with sentences numbered; by his system, the first *f*-shape is at 91, §50 and the second at 100, §52.
  - 15 Orchard, *Companion*, p. 34.
  - 16 The Old English version stresses Alexander slaking his own thirst before that of his men and beasts. See Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 137–138.

that whoever wrote it (probably Scribe A) may have seen it as marking the conclusion of a section, with *þa men* starting a new section, Orchard's §16. The second is more disruptive: it comes mid-sentence, mid-line, and mid-page. It may not be coincidental that this is the least likely to be written by Scribe A: perhaps Scribe B or another reader wished to follow up on the scribe's note with an insertion of his own.

The third apparent annotation, that closest to Scribe A's hand and in both form and marginal placement most similar to those in Nero, comes during Alexander's entrance into a rival king's camp, in §24 of the text. Alexander disguises himself as a deserter and manages to see King Porus on the pretext of having information to disclose about the enemy on the eve of battle. Thinking the whole event a great joke, Alexander describes himself as:

forealdod[...]þæs eald  
[...]*þ*he ne mihte elcor gepearman  
buton æt fyre 7æt gledum.

*aged[...]so old[...]that he could not keep himself warm except at the fire and coals.*

As a result, Porus exults in his inevitable victory, saying:

humæg hela ænige gepinne piðme spo  
pan spafor ealdod mon. for þon ic eom  
f me self geong 7hwæt.

*So, how can he succeed in any battle with me when he is such an aged man while I myself am young and fit?*

The marginal *f*-shape occurs in the middle of this exchange, to the left of *me self*. Possibly it marks the end of Porus' speech, though other speech is given no special distinction in this text. Nor is this an effective sectional break as Alexander's report of their conversation continues onto the verso to the end of manuscript line 7, where it is strongly pointed. Orchard does not discuss this passage and I can find no direct verbal resonances, but the discourse of young and old rulers is broadly parallel to that sustained throughout *Beowulf*, from its opening presentation of Scyld Scefing and his son Beow (called Beowulf in the manuscript) to the implicit contrast of Hrothgar and Beowulf, and on to the final contrasts between Beowulf and Wiglaf, and the wider structural comparison between Beowulf's own youth and age.<sup>17</sup> Alexander's intrusion

17 Youth and age are explicitly used as a contrastive (or all-encompassing) pair in, for instance, *Beowulf* lines 72 and 853–854a. It is also used (along with other doublets) in *Judith* at line 166.

into an opponent's camp also corresponds with the same idea in other texts of the codex: as discussed in Chapter 1, all of the Nowell texts offer instances of a heroic, or at least sympathetic, figure entering another's home with hostile intent. There are other parts of *Alexander* with close correspondence to *Beowulf* or the other texts that are not marked in this fashion and I can see no corresponding marks of interest in the relevant passages of the poem; this is at best a provisional explanation. Such interaction with the text remains, nonetheless, interesting and the use of this and similar marks is worthy of further investigation. Possibly, Nowell's damaged margins may once have contained more such indications of interest. It is possible, too, that some or all of these signs were carried over from an exemplar in the same manner as Royal 7. C. xii Scribe B's unthinking reproduction of Ælfric's marginal notes. However, particularly given their recurrence in Nero A. i, these puzzling signs seem to me the ones most worthy of future investigation.

### 164 (BL167)v.18: Marginal Cross

A more clearly interpretive sign appears to the right of manuscript line 164 (BL167)v.18, poetic line 1587, shown in Figure 78. After killing Grendel's Mother, Beowulf sees his earlier foe lying in her cave and beholds him. The manuscript lines read:

he him þæs lean for geald reþe cempa  
toðæs. þe he onræste geseah guð perigne  
grendel licgan aldor leasne + spa him ær +  
gescod hild ætheorote...<sup>18</sup>

*He, fierce warrior, [Beowulf] repaid him [Grendel],  
for that, when he saw him at rest: weary of war,  
Grendel lay deprived of life + because, earlier, +  
battle at Heorot had injured him...*

The cross after *aldorleasne* and that highlighting the position in the margin are in a different colour to that of the main text at this point, though elsewhere Scribe A uses

<sup>18</sup> Both transcript and translation attempt to follow manuscript lineation. The lines are usually printed:

he him þæs lean forgeald,  
reþe cempa, to ðæs þe he onræste geseah  
guðwerigne grendel licgan  
aldorleasne swa him ær gescod  
hild æt Heorote.

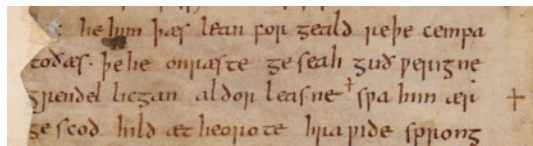


FIGURE 78 *Marginal cross at Grendel's death on 164*  
(BL167)v.17–19.

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ink similar to this shade and it is not impossible that the marks are his; the general lack of this kind of marginal interaction in his texts may make it more likely to be someone else. This moment does, though, fall into the third of the sequences that I have identified as having particularly heavy usage of minor capitals, as shown in Table 4.6, and so it is possible that the scribe had a particular interest in this passage. Either way, the use of two crosses is relatively frequent in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts to mark a site of omission: in such instances, the larger marginal cross is accompanied by the missing text.<sup>19</sup> But there does not seem to be any text missing here and no editors have suggested an emendation or addition. There is no indication of additional text written around the marginal cross, although there is a relatively large amount of marginal space still visible on this side.

Zupitza's explanation for the crosses, followed by Kiernan, relates it to the same word (*aldorleasne*) on the first manuscript page of *Beowulf*.<sup>20</sup> This unlikely scenario could only have occurred if a reader in the Renaissance struggled with the first occurrence of the word, read 71 pages of manuscript, identified that the word occurred more clearly here, and marked it with crosses without returning to the first *aldorleasne* to clarify it for himself or future readers and also without clarifying any other part of the text in the same way. The ink shade is completely unlike that used elsewhere by Renaissance readers such as Nowell who marked some other texts in the manuscript.<sup>21</sup> There is no evidence at all that anyone read *Beowulf* in the period: it is not even included in Smith's 1696 account of its contents.<sup>22</sup> It is surely more likely that a reader, possibly the scribe, engaged with the narrative, marked the moment at which Grendel finally dies, and highlighted it in the margin for future reference or *in memoriam*.<sup>23</sup>

19 Such as on Oxford, CCC MS 197, fol. 63v.

20 In his edition of *Beowulf*, p. 73; Kiernan notes Zupitza's suggestion in *Electronic 'Beowulf'* and agrees with it, pers. corr. 22/1/14.

21 Such as Nowell's signature at 91(93)r; perhaps his or a contemporary's hand above *egsode* on the first page of *Beowulf*; the gloss on 99(95) (BL102)v; the last few lines of *Judith* recorded at the foot of 206 (BL209)v; the underlined names which appear regularly throughout the manuscript. Kiernan discusses many of these 'Reformed Codex'.

22 Smith, *Catalogus*, p. 83.

23 I am indebted to Richard North for this suggestion.

## 128 (BL131)r: Drypoint Sketches

A final puzzling addition to Scribe A's texts is probably not by him. On 128 (BL131)r, the last page of *Alexander* and facing the opening of *Beowulf*, three separate but similar patterns have been inscribed, all across the text space.<sup>24</sup> Roughly in the centre of the page is a shape reminiscent of an eye: a lozenge with long lashes running up from the top line. Beneath is a large spiral; a smaller spiral is at the foot of the text. This crude sketching could have taken place before the parchment was written on. But in other places where parchment damage certainly predates writing, ink bleeds into a groove. I can find no evidence of that here, which makes it likely that the sketch was made after writing. As noted in Chapter 3, there is no evidence of a drypoint stage underlying the illustrations to *Wonders*; there is also limited evidence for use of drypoint by readers in the post-Anglo-Saxon period.<sup>25</sup> It seems likely that at least one individual, roughly contemporary with the making of the manuscript, interacted with the codex (if, apparently, not with its texts) in a relatively personal context. This is a fairly common phenomenon in the period; similarly disengaged and creative etchings are made in several places in the Exeter Book; along with the more celebrated examples of marginal faces, triangles are neatly scored into the margin of fol. 59v.

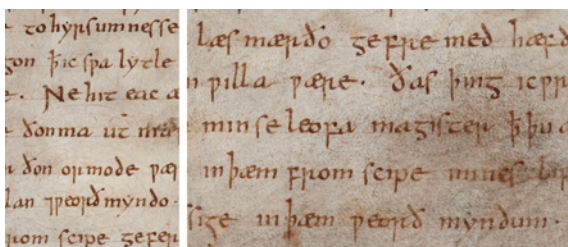


FIGURE 79 Drypoint patterns on 128 (BL131)r, the last page of *Alexander*, from the centre of lines 7–13 and 16–20. See also colour plate 17.

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- 24 As far as I know, I am the first to publish these drawings, though they may be referred to by Gerritsen, 'Supplementary', p. 300. Pulsiano described and copied them in his notes on the manuscript, and they have probably been seen by other readers.
- 25 Don McGovern, 'Unnoticed Punctuation in the Exeter Book', *Medium Ævum* 52 (1983), 90–99; see also Thomson, 'Whistle While You Work', pp. 112–114 on drypoint in the Exeter Book.

## 202 (BL205): Marginal Designs

While it is mostly lost to marginal damage, there appears to have been an effort to decorate some margins of *Judith*, which I do not think has been discussed before. In the extant text, this is most apparent on either side of folio 202 (BL205), on the right side of the recto and left side of the verso, as in Figure 80, though there are indications that it may be present on other pages. The damage of the fire and subsequent trimming of the

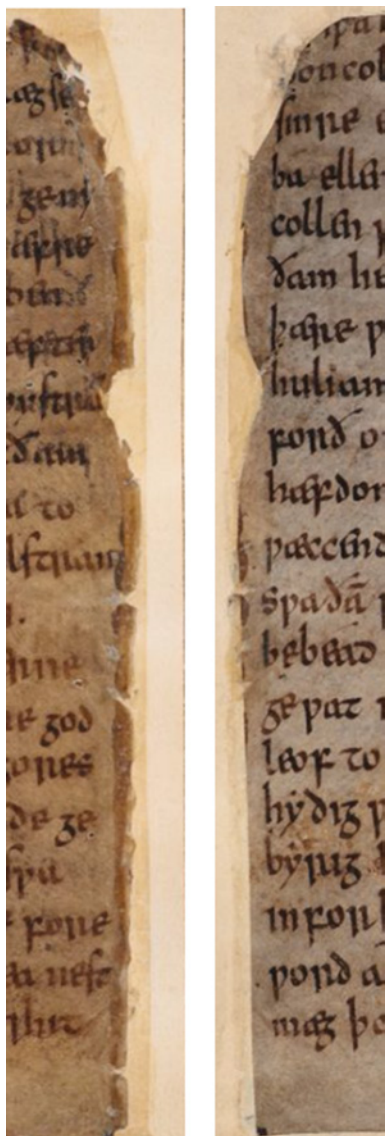


FIGURE 80

*Marginal decoration in Judith, on 202 (BL205)<sup>r</sup> and v. See also colour plate 18.*

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margins may have obscured similar decoration elsewhere in the codex. It is perfectly clear in the facsimiles of this folio, but I found it much easier to identify with confidence when examining the manuscript physically, where the distinction between stray marks and deliberate design is clearer. It is not possible to attribute the decoration to the scribe or to anyone else; the only certainty can be that it was made before 1731 when much of it was burnt away. The deep red colour is not unlike that in the images of *Wonders*, and the decorative impulse could be connected with the slight elaborations to major capitals and other indications of visual interest in *Judith*. The readiest, though at best tentative, explanation for the marks is therefore that they were made by either Scribe B or the colourist. The inconsistent use of colour discussed in Chapters 3 and 4 should be recalled here: this dark red is the only colour which existed in abundance for use in the images of *Wonders*, and is similar to (though perhaps a little darker than) the red used to stain a few letters at the start of *Alexander*. In my narrative of the codex's construction as laid out in Chapter 2, *Judith* was likely written at about the same time as Scribe A worked on *St Christopher* and moved on to *Wonders*: assuming they even worked at exactly the same time, the precise alignment depends on how much Scribe B is assumed to have written before *Judith*. But it is entirely feasible that a few pages in *Judith*, and perhaps elsewhere, were decorated in the same opportunistic style as those letters in *Alexander*, using up the same surplus stock of red.



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## *Colour Plates*





FIGURE 7 *Magical trees on, l-r, 100(96) (BL103)v; 102 (BL105)r; 103 (BL106)v.*



FIGURE 8 *Frontispieces to New Minster's Liber Vitae, Stowe 944 fol. 6r; and the New Minster Charter, Vespasian A. viii, fol. 2v.*



FIGURE 9  
*Two camels by different hands on 98(100)*  
*(BL101)v.*



FIGURE 10  
*Catinii by different hands on 103 (BL106)r.*





FIGURE 11 Ants as large as dogs having their gold stolen from them on 98(100) (BL101r).



FIGURE 16 103 (BL106)v and details of textual squeezing and spacing.



FIGURE 18 The two-headed snake and detail of textual interaction on 96(98) (BL99)v.



FIGURE 19 Effective use of colour and parchment in the Blemmya on 99(95) (BL102)v; Donestre and his victim on 100(96) (BL103)v; and less vividly for the Panotus on 101 (BL104)r.





FIGURE 22

*Some coloured capitals early in Alexander, on 104 (BL107)r and 105 (BL108)v.*



FIGURE 28 *Different faces, flipped and resized for comparison, l-r and top to bottom, shepherd and Hostes (99(95) (BL102)r); priest in his temple (101 (BL104)v); the three figures at the council on the mountain (102 (BL105)r); bearded woman (102 (BL105)v); seated man and generous man (both on 103 (BL106)r).*

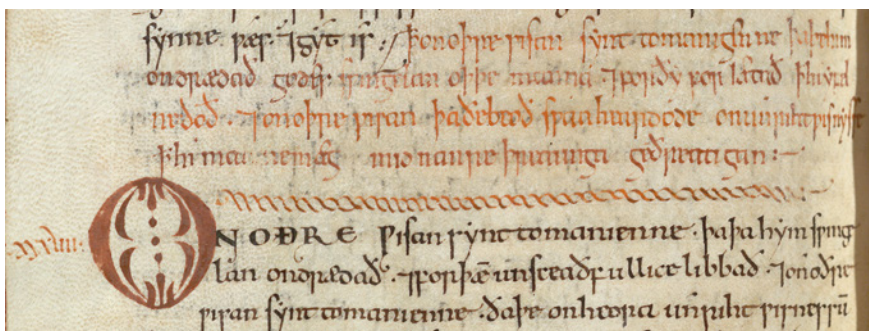
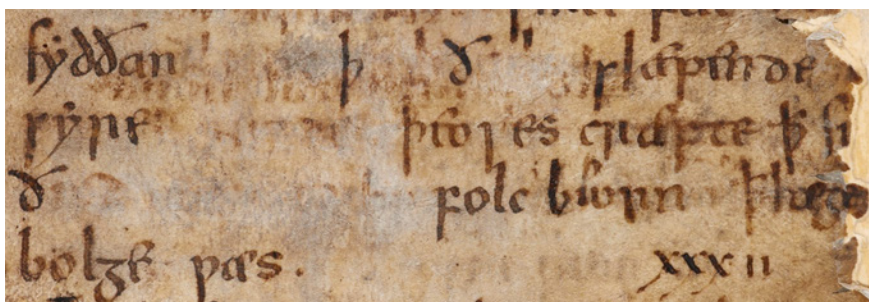






FIGURE 74 *A noble Cynocephalus on Nowell 97(99) (BL100)r.*

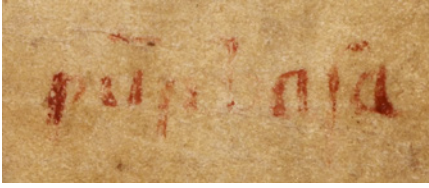


FIGURE 75  
?pūbasa at the end of Wonders, on 103  
(BL106)v.19.

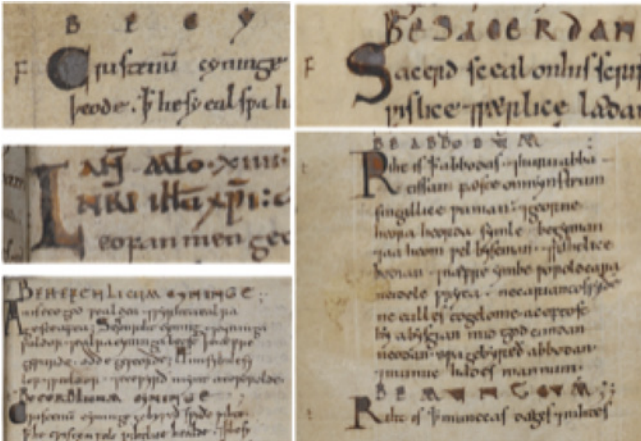


FIGURE 77 *l-r and top to bottom, marginal f-like signs in Nero A. i, fols. 70–177, on fols. 70r, 102r, 110r; marginal t on fols. 103r, 105v; marginal f and t on 120r.*

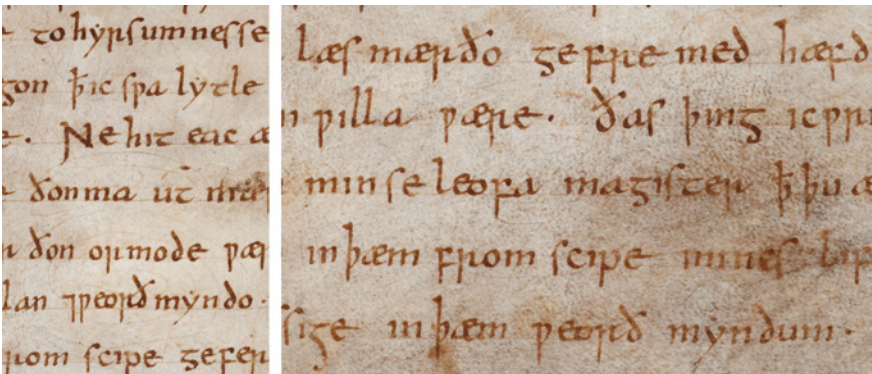


FIGURE 79 *Drypoint patterns on 128 (BL131)r, the last page of Alexander, from the centre of lines 7–13 and 16–19.*



FIGURE 80 *Marginal decoration in Judith, on 202 (BL205)r and v.*